PSYCHOLOGY AND EXISTENTIALISM

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Conal McKenna

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Supervised by Prof. W.T. Stronguar

C O N T E N T S

A B S T R A C T

The primary goal of this thesis is to analyse the relationship of psychology to existentialism.

Part One presents the historical derivation of the existential viewpoint as well as a discussion of the various differences between essentialism and existentialism.

This is followed by an examination of the relationship of scientific psychology - here depicted as a pursuit akin to the natural sciences - to existentialism. The latter is seen as calling for a science of humans. That is, one based on (a) a recognition of the unique features of human beings; and (b) the assumption that unless these features are included in accounts of human action such accounts suffer loss of intelligibility.

Chapter Three is taken up with an examination of the notions of anxiety and freedom, by way of demonstrating the existential method of apprehending various psychological categories.

The existentialist approach to psychotherapy is then examined, as are some of the implications for therapists of maintaining an existential orientation.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Various writers (Shotter, 1975; Westland, 1978; Koch, 1964; and Boring, 1963) have commented on the divisiveness within psychology created by differing opinions as to (a) What can reasonably be included within psychology's subject matter; (b) the validity of various models of humanity used to elucidate human behaviour; and (c) What the aims, if any, of psychology are.

The behaviourist school stresses prediction and control as research methods that yield significant results. And in the case of Skinner, for example, as a type of social ethic which may bring some order to the world in a dangerous age. ("Beyond Freedom and Dignity", "Walden II".) Freud sought to make clear the role of biology in human behaviour. The group of people blanketed by the terms "Humanistic or Third Force Psychology" are basically concerned with establishing what may be called a human science.* This science is based on the assumption that the characteristics possessed by humans are unique to them and that failure to take these characteristics into account produces less than satisfactory or even trivial results. The existentialists in particular have undertaken a searching examination of what it means to be human, and from this analysis have concluded that there is a great deal to be gained from releasing psychology from the

Existentialist critiques of positivist psychology generally entail assertions that such a programme ignores consciousness, self-awareness and other supposedly unique human characteristics, and therefore produce results that are not intelligible from a human perspective. Furthermore, there is the implication that the tenor of such research reduces the status of humans to that of any other manipulable object.

The rejoinder from those psychologists who are committed to the natural science mode of investigation is that existentialism (or any other facet of the Third Force movement, so called) is an obfuscating anthropocentric philosophy which is openly subjective and therefore antagonistic to the objective ideal upheld by science. Existential assertions concerning the fundamental nature of the human condition cannot be empirically tested, and therefore, whatever their philosophical appeal, are of no use to science, which sets certain standards of methodology and epistemology in its search for truth.

It will be the initial task of this work to establish what is meant by the term "existential", by an examination of the historical development of various ideas and concepts regarding the apprehension of reality. Following this is an historical overview of some of the major existential writers starting with Kierkegaard.

The examination of the relationship of existentialism to psychology will suggest that the present, mainly positivist influence in psychology, has a number of shortcomings of both a scientific and ethical nature. The theoretical ability of positivist psychology to predict and control human behaviour is also questioned, since shortcomings in behaviourist programmes are often attributed to insufficient data and background knowledge, and not to the possibility that the belief in the deterministic nature of behaviour may be incorrect. Furthermore the ability of natural science methods to come to grips and provide reasonably intelligible answers to the various aspects of human behaviour is questioned. A human science is suggested as an alternative. The role of existentialism in such a science becomes apparent, since it seeks to provide an analysis of what it is to be human.

It is not suggested that a human science is in some way superior to the natural sciences. What is suggested is that because of the nature of humans, which will be discussed, the methods of the hard sciences are conceptually unequipped to deal with reality at the self-conscious level. The concepts of freedom and anxiety as they are seen from the existential viewpoint are explicated to demonstrate the unique method of existential investigation and understanding of human reality - a reality which is dominated by the mode known

as Eigenwelt, that is, that of the subjective "I". The existential method of apprehending human reality is further examined within the framework of existential psychotherapy.

Whether existentialism is a world-view,a philosophy, or merely a certain style of apprehending reality is of minor importance. It is apparent, however, that it contains certain explicit and implicit values, by virtue of the assertions it makes about human nature, and what is considered to be a desirable mode of existence. This ethical content is examined, as are some of the implications it carries for existential therapists.

CHAPTER I

H I S T O R I C A L O V E R V I E W

Due to its popularisation through the works of Sartre, Camus, Beckett and others, existentialism became somewhat of a fad in the post World War Two years. A lack of acquaintance with the influences and origins of the works of these writers has led some critics of existentialism to suppose that their world-view is simply derivative of a pessimism springing from their placement in an era that had known two world wars, global economic collapse, revolutions made and betrayed. It is not to be denied that years of occupation and the threat of a nuclear showdown between the victors provided conditions conducive to an existential mode of questioning, such that one is led to ask, for example, what does it mean for me, as an individual, to exist, especially in the knowledge that my existence is precarious, and its end is certain ? War and revolution, however, are only exaggerations of the conditions under which we live in normal times, which most of us are prone to forget for various reasons, not least among them the wish to maintain at least the illusion of

security. Therefore, to see existentialism as solely an aberrant world-view formed under stressful conditions is erroneous, and misses the points which existentialists wish to make about our existence as self-aware beings. The concern here is with being, therefore we begin with the Greeks, asking what does it mean to exist, to be ?

Parmenides maintained that being was identical with what can be thought, that is, with essence and meaning. "Thou canst not know what is not - that is impossible - nor utter it; for it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be." (1) Hence only those entitiies that are intelligible or rational can be said to exist. The obvious problem here is one of appearance. Some things only appear to be, but obviously they must appear to be something. This introduces the problem of existence versus essence. Parmenides places reality in the essence of things (that is, those things that can be named - "what is a pencil?" It is a cylindrical piece of wood with a filament of graphite and clay.), yet is aware that there is at least an appearance of individual existence. How are these two to be related, if reality can be identified only with one, namely essence ?

Plato upheld Parmenides' position, that being is a matter of what is (reality) and what merely appears to be (appearance). Reality is identical with essences. Plato developed the notion of essences as ideas - pure thought. This is the highest reality. For example, in

the essential world one may have the idea of the perfect circle. In the existent world, the world we encounter, such an entity does not exist. That such imperfection is to be found was evidence for Plato that the existential world, that world outside ideas, was not truly real. He did grant this world a limited reality however, based on its (imperfect) relationship to the world of ideas. Furthermore it is only possible to conceive of the existential world because of the world of ideas. This, as Blocker (1979) points out, renders the material world gratuitous. An abyss opens up, separating essence and existence.

Aristotle, in an attempt to hold the middle ground, posited that real being was a synthesis of essence and existence an amalgam of the formal ideas of Plato and the world of encountered material. He sought Plato's essences in material existence, and attempted to ground reality in the particular information acquired through our senses.

Aristotle's synthesis was not entirely successful, and in his elucidation of the question of being he shifts to an emphasis on Plato's essences. Russell quotes Zeller in this matter: "The 'forms' had for him, as the 'ideas' had for Plato, a metaphysical existence of their own, as conditioning all individual things. And keenly as he followed the growth of ideas out of experience, it is nonetheless true that these ideas,

especially at the point where they are furthest removed from experience and immediate perception, are metamorphosed in the end from a logical product of human thought into an immediate presentment of a super-sensible world, and the object in that sense, of an intellectual intuition." (2)

The factors which drive Aristotle to this position are particularly important to the whole matter of the philosophical analysis of the question of existence. And it is worthwhile to note the comments of Blocker: " ... essence is all that can be known, thought, or spoken of anything. We remain convinced, instinctively, that there is something else, variously called matter, existence, substratum, which thoughts are about and essences are of, but we can't say or think what it is, for as soon as we do what we say becomes an essence." (3)

What then can be said of existence other than that "it is"? By definition, what is stated is an essence, that is, a universal, abstract attribute. It would appear then, that the communication of an existential reality is not possible by the languages of philosophy or science, or perhaps any language. Existentialism is often attacked for its lack of scientific precision (Koch, 1964, for example). Strictly speaking, these above are the reasons. The articulation of a thing's attributes, its essences, does not define its existence. This has ramifications for the role of existentialism in

psychology. The explication of an individual's behaviour, dispositions, tendencies and the like can never exhaust the possibilities of that individual. Even after all the data are in, one could still not say exactly what the individual is.*

The extreme development of the essentialist position results in idealism, which holds that real knowledge resides only in thoughts and ideas. Plato's ideas, when internalised must result in a subjectivism like Berkeley's. This overcomes the problem of duality since there exists no tension between my thoughts of reality and what reality actually is .

The problems of modern philosophy and psychology, however, inhere mainly from a realist philosophy which uses the same categories as Parmenides the Greek, but with a reverse of emphasis. The realist assumes a real world "out there" as well as an essential world of ideas and sensations of what is out there. This essential world constitutes our linguistic or psychological world of meaning.. We are left with a dualism and the problem of how to relate the two sides of the equation, essence and existence. Descartes' attempt to establish philosophy and science on immoveable foundations led him

* This is not merely the assertion that the definition of existence is arbitrary. What is meant here is that the method of natural science, relying as it does on the elucidation of essences, cannot hope to provide a full or final account of man

to a dualism (mainly because he wished to save people from a mechanistic reduction), that has resisted all formal attempts at unification. The problems inherent in a dualistic position stem from the above-mentioned attempt to establish a relation between what we think the world is, and what it actually is. Over the centuries, as various thinkers began to realise that we apprehend the world via the media of our senses, they were driven to conclude (no doubt on the basis that our senses can at times be misleading) that our understanding of the world may be faulty or deficient due to the imperfection of the senses. This also assumes a clear demarcation between the experiencer and what is experienced.

Locke and Kant, among others, posit a reality which completely transcends our conceptual understanding. Knowledge of this reality is of dubious validity, since what is known are essential concepts. Therefore, how can we know if ideas resemble their putative external causes, and if they do, how systematic is this resemblance, and how is it achieved ?

Both Locke and Kant admit that nothing other than that "it is" can be said of this independent reality. We are driven back to the same conclusion. The very attempt to speak, even to think, discursively, of existence, reduces it to essence. This is perhaps sometimes intuitivley apparent in the inability to express oneself

in words alone. A storyteller, poet or artist, if they are to speak to our existence, must be able to invoke not only an intellectual appreciation, but what is usually called a feeling. Many of the existential writers have used the novel as a means to elucidate existential themes. As Blocker points out "...[the existential writers] ... seem to agree that while existence cannot be logically articulated, it can be artistically evoked." (4) This has implications for the role, if any, that existentialism may play in psychology and psychotherapy. As far as experimental psychology is concerned, the usefulness of concepts which cannot be logically stated would seem to be rather limited, to understate the case. In psychotherapy, however, the assertion that one cannot logically articulate existence seems to find its mark in therapeutic techniques such as role playing, play therapy, and the like.

Philosophy, post-Aristotle, tends to divide itself into idealism versus realism, with the latter adopting a distinct dualism that differentiates meaningful being (essence) and an existence which is "independent of meaning and human consciousness." (5) Existence is filtered by us into essences, and the link between them is not understood. Idealists do not assume, for what seem pragmatic reasons, an independent reality, and therefore reality is a matter of essences. Blocker goes to some lengths to explain the realist/idealist debate

which develops somewhat in the following way. For an idealist to say that a thing is, it must be conceptually meaningful (being is meaning) - it must be knowable in terms of logical thought. If not, then it is nothing. For a realist, nothing, as well as being a function of meaninglessness, also indicates the category of transcendent reality (like Locke and Kant) which is assumed to exist (it is what essences are of), but which cannot be spoken of as it is.* "Thus leaving aside non-being ...realists admit two ontological categories: reality (existence) and meaningful being (essence), whereas the idealists allow only one, meaningful being. Hence the clash of essence and existence only occurs within realism, and does not appear in idealism." (6)

This leads to the observation that even some writers who are called existentialists are, in the above technical sense, idealists. Here is an early indication that existentialism is not a system of philosophy in the usual sense. Heidegger, while he adresses existential

* "Nothing" for the realist does not indicate merely a void, but also a lack, on our part, of an ability to directly apprehend reality. "Nothing" is the inability to grasp existence other than through our sensory and conceptual apparatus. This problem is found in Sartre's account of consciousness and its relation to the existent world. [See below].

themes is, at least early on, an idealist. " For Heidegger and Husserl there is no contrast between meaningful being and reality, but only between meaning which is being, and non-meaning, which is nothing. Hence they understand being exclusively in terms of essence. Either we have an understandable something or we have nothing. There is no sense of an independently existing, transcendent, but unknowable reality "out there", prior to understanding." (7)

Two points are noteworthy here: (1) It is important to distinguish between the essential and existential modes of thought relevant to the realist orientation, and to be aware that the tendency has been to assert the essential, conceptual side of the duality, for the very good reason that rational, logical, scientific language is inappropriate, in the strict sense, to an investigation of existence; (2) Within the tradition of existential writing, there are individuals whose assumptions place them outside the realist camp, and therefore they cannot be said to be writing from an essentialist versus existentialist perspective. They adress the question of being. However to characterise them as filling the side of the equation which is anti-scientif-ic and anti-rational, is obviously quite mistaken. The historically formed differences over the characterisat-ion of reality have been briefly stated. Although some existentialist writers may be philosophically inclined to a realist position, and therefore to investigate

reality in terms of a dualism, one side of which is termed existence, existentialism per se need not necessitate such a dualist position. In fact a good deal of the existential work has sought to undercut the subject /object dichotomy. The scientific endeavour is often characterised as a search for objectivity. It now seems likely that such objectivity is a useful fiction, but no more than that. Existentialism is often thought of as subjectivist. However, if objectivity is no more than a fiction, subjectivity can be no more than this either, since they are dependant categories. It remains to be seen however, if existential concepts can be stated in such a way that would leave them open to scientific investigation. These notions will be examined in Chapters III and IV.

K I E R K E G A A R D

The resurgence of existential themes in the modern era is generally attributed to the works of the Danish theologian, Soren Kierkegaard, who espoused a mode of existential thought and existence in reaction to what he saw as the overly abstract philosophical edifice created by Hegel, and the stagnation of religious life, in a country where everyone was a Christian by definition, but not by action. One hastens to add, however, that it was not a concern with religion per se which made

Kierkegaard the founder of existentialism, but rather his treatment of this matter. "...this does not mean that all existentialists deliberateley derived all or any part of their thought from Kierkegaard, but that he first manifested the tendencies which are the mark of existentialism." (8) One such tendency, according to Warnock is "...the recognition that each person, in his own individual existence, must receive and understand a purely personal and subjective truth .... just as the individual has his own passions and his own life to live, so he has his own truths." (9) From these comments of Warnock's can be seen the oft-mentioned emphasis which the existentialists place on individual truth. This subjectivism is often a point of departure for criticisms of existentialism as being overly introverted and solipsistic. In his call for a subjective rendering of truth, however, Kierkegaard is in no way attempting to deny the validity of the essentialist approach; but in regard to human existence he is quite emphatic. "...modern philosophy has fogotten what it means to be a human being. Not what it means to be a human being in general [i.e., an essential approach]....but what it means that you and I and he are human beings, each one for himself. " (10)

The themes of existentialist writers derive directly from Kierkegaard's emphasis on the fact that, for an individual human, it is the very fact of the

recognition of his or her own existence, not only as part of some generalised group, race etc., and the consequences of this recognition, which can markedly alter one's orientation to oneself and the world. More precisely, this recognition is fundamental to a person's "proper" existence. Johnson maintains that the ethical imperative inherent in Kierkegaard's existentialism is this: "Become what you are". To do this one must first of all come to recognise and comprehend the basic attributes of human existence. These givens include such things as our own finitude, the fact that we and things are subject to change, that we have limited time and limited capacities and abilities both physically and mentally. How these universals* of existence apply to "me as the individual" constitute existential questions. As far as can be seen, Kierkegaard and the other existentialists do not seek to answer questions concerning "the meaning of life" in general, or mine in particular. Rather, they emphasise that it is part of the human condition, to ask such questions. It is only

* These universals are derived from an ontological analysis of the human condition. Although they appear to be ubiquitous, it cannot be denied that they are the product of human thought and therefore are as subject to error as other such products.

in the context of an individually lived existence that answers can be forthcoming. Even then, they will only be true for that individual. These answers, Kierkegaard would hold, can only have validity when they are formed in the light of the above-mentioned givens of existence. One could not, supposedly be said to be living an authentic existence if one did not recognise that one's existence could be suddenly, and without sign or warning, ended, since this is a condition under which we certainly do live.

Kierkegaard, however, is not advocating a totally subjectivist position, and it is well to be aware of what he means by subjective: "thought which evolves around the subject in his indivuality, but is not securely anchored in the universally human will result in aberrant inwardness - madness. Subjective thought, combining as it does the individual and the universal is then a mean between total objectivity and purely idiosyncratic reflection." (11)*

It seems likely that Kierkegaard wished to overcome an absolute object/subject dichotomy but was somewhat

* This does not imply the imposition of personalism on reality. Part of this subjectivity is the knowledge that the individual does not constitute the world. On the contrary, the interrelationships of people, individuals and things must be reckoned with.

bound by the terminology and prevailing philosophy of his time, which was heavily influenced by the dualism of Descartes and the transcendental idealism of Kant. What Kierkegaard appears to imply by subjectivity is a type of inwardly-oriented self-awareness. The individual is the final arbiter on all points relating to his or her existence.

As the first of the modern existentialists Kierkegaard runs a course between total objectivity: the derivation of values and concepts from outside oneself which one then puts on like clothes, and at the other extreme, what he sees as the mark of insanity: namely the total rejection of existent reality. On the contrast, as he perceived it, between subjective and objective knowledge, Kierkegaard stated "When the question of truth is stated in an objective manner, reflection is directed objectively to the truth, as an object to which the knower is related. Reflection is not focussed on the relationship, however, but on the question whether it is the truth to which the knower is related. If only the object to which he is related is the truth, the subject is accounted to be in the truth. When the question of truth is raised subjectively, reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of the individual's relationship; if only the mode of this relationship is in the truth the individual is in truth even if he should happen to be thus related to what is

not true....When subjectivity, inwardness, is the truth, the truth becomes objectively a paradox; and the fact that the truth is objectively a paradox shows in its turn that subjectivity is the truth. For the objective situation (of entertaining a paradoxical thought) is repellant, and the expression for the objective repulsion constitutes the tension and the measure of the corresponding inwardness. The paradoxical nature of the truth is its objective uncertainty; this uncertainty is the expression for the passionate inwardness and this passion is precisely the truth." (12)

It is not intended that we examine the various notions of truth here. Suffice to say however that Kierkegaard's concepts of truth would receive little support from the scientific community. Obviously he is speaking of a different kind of truth, which may be identical with objective truth, so-called, but not necessarily. Rather this truth is a type of ethical truth.

Kierkegaard claims that for an individual mindful of what it means to be human (i.e., aware of human dimensions of existence; namely, finitude, uncertainty, a degree of determination of being etc), subjectivity is the way to proceed to the truth regarding his or her own existence. Objective thught is focussed on something outside of the individual and therefore only comes to him or her secondhand, via concepts and abstractions.

This is indicative of Kierkegaard's unstated dualist orientation. He makes no attempt to unify human existence, and the human inventions of concepts by which we speak of this existence. Like Descartes, Kierkegaard realises that the principal existential statement of fact is "It is" or "I am". Beyond that, nothing of certainty can be said. Kierkegaard does not attempt to deny the validity of scientific or philosophical truths, but claims that they do not pertain to the individual existent. He appears to be saying that there are any number of truths, the validity of which can only be judged from the observer's standpoint. If one is given to looking for final truths or all-encompassing systems it becomes apparent that there is a disparity between the individual who claims he experiences himself as a free agent capable of intentional acts, and a philosophical and scientific tradition that proposes, with its own good evidential reasons, that the way we say we are, and the way science says we are, do not match up. The situation can be stated in a number of ways: (1) Is this basically an issue as to what constitutes valid truth, i.e., scientific versus personal knowledge ? This would often seem to be the case when the proponents of one school assert their position by calling into doubt the claims of the other, and pointing out its shortcomings.

(2) Is it possible to adopt the position where one maintains a degree of existential freedom but recognises that one is the focus of forces and influences over which one has little control or no control at all ? This is essentially Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's position. Sartre would at first assume an unfettered human capability for freedom of choice and action.

Inherent in this is the question of what is to be taken as the nature of action in the world - science generally assumes a causative role, and does not admit to any sort of (eg) teleological principles. Psychology in the twentieth century has made the issue even more turgid (ironically enough by its attempts to simplify matters) by attempting to do away with the notion of consciousness. Self-awareness is a human attribute.* Its role in initiating or causing action, whether it is itself caused in the sense of being formed by antecedent events, is unknown. The inability to come to grips with these problems would seem to indicate a deficiency in

* It is not intended to enter into a discussion regarding the difference between consciousness and self-consciousness. Whether and to what degree animals possess consciousness in terms of an ability to self-reflect or to form some sort of self-identity is an important question, but one which is beyond the scope of this work.

the way the problems are conceptualised - assuming they are capable of being adequately conceptualised. Science presents mechanisms to explain how A is said to cause B. Consciousness is thus "caused" by the action of neurons and electrical and material messages in the materialist conception. The leap from a purely physical analysis to our experience of consciousness appears to be a vast one. The ability to objectify may be a source of the problem. It cannot be seen how consciousness could be identifiable with the action of neurons, because such concepts have been objectivized - made remote from human beings. The remoteness of such ideas from the way humans generally experience themselves gives them emotionally negative content which makes them unacceptable to many people who see in them a diminishment of their humanity, a reduction to materialism.

Kierkegaard was not so much interested in these matters, though they are relevant to his position, as he was with explicating a wholly human reality.* This reality cannot be conceptualised and examined from a natural science perspective. Such a perspective is found to be lacking because it does not deal with matters that are specifically human (self-awareness

* By this is meant the significance of the subjective mode of experience and all that it entails.

and its consequences), nor can it, since its method implies objectivisation, in Kierkegaard's view.

N I E T Z S C H E

The inclusion of Nietzsche in an historical survey that also includes Kierkegaard serves to illustrate that the existential tradition is not a system of philosophy in that it holds to a coherent world-view, except perhaps in the sense of a personal ethic based on unremitting self-examination. While Kierkegaard was a dedicated Christian who was very much concerned with what it meant to be a Christian, Nietzsche was a trenchant atheist whose best-remembered aphorism was "God is dead". The thematic relationship between Nietzsche and Kierkegaard consists in their common belief that human truths can only be adjudged from an examination of the existent lives of individuals. Kierkegaard held that, although his countrymen saw themselves as christians (from the very fact of their nationality), few had any idea of what this should mean in terms of leading a christian life. Nietzsche contended that god is dead and that people themselves had killed him. That is, no one believed any longer in a divine guiding hand, yet few were willing to live with the consequences of such a state of affairs. That is, if

god is dead, then in a moral and ethical sense we as humans are completely thrown back upon our own resources. We can have no recourse to a divinely given set of laws and moral injunctions with which to order our lives. The maintenance of this fiction represents, according to Nietzsche, the worst kind of slave mentality.

Under the spell of this fictitious god, man can never truly be man in that he cannot take total responsibility for himself. Always there is the temptation to retreat into ideology, and Nietzsche saw christianity as the worst kind of ideology, since it relieves man of the duty which makes him most human, namely the mapping out of his own moral and ethical course. The embodiment of such a person is found in Nietzsche's concept of Ubermenschen, which is meant to imply those who are completely in charge of their own lives (rather than those who are "Overmen", i.e., dictators or super men, as the term is often translated. Kaufmann, 1971, mentions the unsatisfactoriness of many translations.)

Nietzsche's broadside at ideology typifies the existentialist's attitude to systems in general. This attitude is clearly stated by William Earle in his introduction to Karl Jaspers' "Reason and Existence": "Rather his (Jaspers') philosophizing is designed to

awaken us to our own authentic human situation, and this situation, he is convinced, is of such a sort that any effort to force it conceptually or dogmatically, any attempt to schematise it exhaustively, or turn it into something known, must turn into a falsification of the situation itself, and in a destruction of our own authentic possibilities." (13)

Thus one cannot logically speak of an existential philosophy or system. To use the phrase "an existentialist" in the way one uses "Marxist-Leninist", in the sense of a person who has a set of beliefs about the world and how it is and should be etc., is a contradiction in terms. If one has a system to order one's life then one could not be said to be living the existential life because the latter, by definition, presupposes an absence of the former.

The aim of existentialism is not to negate philosophical or scientific systems per se, by asserting that they do not reveal the real world. Rather, the existential critique of science and philosophy derives from the insistence that the world of science and philosophy is a conceptual world, which may be useful in an instrumental sense, but which is unable to help the individual in his or her own existence. One could counter that this is not clearly the case. For example, it may come to be known through scientific investigation

that the second child born in every family is more prone to illness and disease. In the interests of the country and the world it might appear that the scientific evidence supports having only one child. Therefore couples may be wont to say: "The scientists say it is ill-advised to have a second child, therefore we won't." It is this objectivisation of knowledge and the consequent removal of the individual from the centre of the decision-making process, that the existentialists rail against. To become so enamoured of a system of science, philosophy or religion that one's decisions are not one's own, but determined by the system's dictates is to deny one's freedom, which is limited enough already. It is to live inauthentically, or as Sartre puts it, in bad faith.

Nietzsche considers that due to the power of social and cultural pressures we have lost the capability for spontaneous action to a very large extent. We are inclined to dress everything up in a costume of reason. However reason does not motivate our action. Rather, it is primordial will which guides us. Reason follows in its path and justifies it. Nietzsche, as Carroll (1974) points out, is an irrationalist, in the sense that he was in direct opposition to the British rationalist school of thought of J. S. Mill and the liberals, as well as to Kant, who believed that reason is the highest

power. Our reasons, Nietzsche says, are all given after the event, and are themselves the result of a desire to appear reasonable, since reasonableness is inculcated into us from birth as a desirable attribute. Religion and ideology destroy spontaneity. Rationalization and popular morality stem from these two and occur when they have fallen into disrepute, according to Nietzsche.

Despite his attacks on rationality and morality, Nietzsche, it must be noted, did not deny that humans are capable of both. However, when they are foisted onto the individual, rather than growing out of him as the result of conscious reflection, then they merely serve to dress up his baser tendencies in culturally and socially acceptable attire. Nietzsche himself said it was his considered task to " make the individual uncomfortable." The source of this discomfort is the realisation that our supposed reasons for doing things (eg., "It's christian", "It's correct", "It's sensible") more often obscure the actual motives of our actions from others and ourselves.

By pointing out the hollowness and contingent nature of systems of morality and values, Nietzsche clears the decks for individual freedom of action. At the same time, he leaves no principles by which to order human existence. What, in the absence of commonly shared beliefs and values, either secular or religious, is to

prevent a Hobbesian war of all against all except displays of sheer power and totalitarian terror ?

Despite his vitriolic assaults on reason and morality, and the facade of our clearly held cultural and social beliefs, Carroll claims that Nietzsche's continual search for "pure truth, for origins, for the pivot of existence, for traces of the transcendental" (15) saves him from cynicism or nihilism. One can see Nietzsche in this light as a sort of Descartes of human actions, who wished to expose the falsity of all hitherto given explanations, and build a theory of human motivation on solid foundations.

From Nietzsche the existential tradition derives its highly skeptical approach to systems of morality, ethics and social order. As one who was most interested to ask questions concerning human motivation, Nietzsche put himself in the tradition of the psychological writer, and his contention that will or the instincts were powerful governing forces anticipates Frued and the psychoanalytic school.

All systems, Nietzsche maintains, are inventions. There is no god, and therefore no body of ethical or moral standards, save those we invent. These standards, thus exposed, take on a rather arbitrary nature. Anyone who says I must act this way because this is the moral way is abdicating his own freedom. By rationalising away

his freedom man becomes one thing among others, and merely a unit of that amorphous mass Nietzsche called "the herd".

Nietzsche was an unrelenting iconoclast who is sometimes dismissed as a mad nihilist. He attempted to demonstrate that there are no firm moral footholds except self-made ones, yet he does not assert that nothing matters. What matters for Nietzsche is truth, although he gave no apparent description of such truth, or truths, that would aid their recognition should they be encountered. "Do we, after all, seek rest and peace and pleasure in our inquiries ? No, only truth, even if it be the most abhorrent and ugly." (16) The means by which one should seek this truth are through reason and empiricism. Nietzsche denigrated the belief that humans were always reasonable creatures, but he was not decrying the value of reason, or denying that humans could be directed by their own reasoning. "The schools have no more important task than to teach rigorous thinking, cautious judgement and consistent inference. Therefore they should leave alone whatever is not suitable for these operations.... religion, for example. After all, they can be sure that later on man's fogginess, habit and need will slacken the bow of an all-too-taut thinking.... Europe was made Europe by reason in the schools; in the Middle Ages Europe was on

the way to becoming a piece and appendix of Asia again, by losing the scientific sense it owed to the greeks." (17)

Nietzsche's depiction of the human condition develops somewhat as follows: Ordinarily we are asleep and it is only through constant vigilance that we may say that we know what we are doing and why we are doing it. Our actions and attitudes are so likely to become habitual that our rationality is something that gets attached to an action after the event, because we were asleep when it occurred. It is only when someone or something startles us to ask "Why did you do that?" that we temporarily awake and find it necessary to manufacture a reason. Our drowsiness diminishes our freedom since we are, in this state, at the mercy of whatever forces may impinge upon us. Only by an untiring questioning of matters and conditions that we normally take for granted as "true", "bad", or "moral", may we find our own way to an existence that can rightfully be called human. Nietzsche does not, it is asserted, set reason against will. Rather, the two should go hand in hand. Spontaneous, and yet capable of reason - this is man's dual capability (although to act spontaneously and be governed by reason does not seem wholly compatible. Discursive thought often paralyses spontaneity, especially when ideas of "I" enter into that thought.)

Nietzsche assails the belief that we are somehow naturally rational, without effort. Rather, he maintains, the reverse is the case. We are sleepwalkers, and our rationality and our culture are usually no more than masks we pull over our faces to disguise our somnambulance from ourselves and others. Nietzsche was no less critical of certain orientations to science than he was to other distorting rationalisations. "Against that positivism (of Comte et al) which stops before phenomena saying "there are only facts," I should say: no, it is precisely facts that do not exist, only interpretations...." (18)

H E I D E G G E R

The first thing that most people notice about Heidegger is how much effort it takes to read him. Tennessen waxes lyrical about "...the general continental grandiloquence and the particularly pompous teutonic turgidity in Heidegger's high-flown glutinated conglomerate of bombastic neologisms." (19)

It must be admitted however, that Heidegger's subject matter does not lend itself to a description by a vocabulary to be found in the sunday papers. We can either say nothing or we must say a lot. Heidegger chose

the second alternative. In the introduction to "On the Essence of Truth" there is an attempted explanation of the reason for the ponderous style of which Tennessen complains. "...the most dazzlingly finished (of "truths") become "eternal truths". Presupposed in such truths of faith or science or even the university of life however, is a kind of opening or openness by virtue of which something can and does show itself, and let itself be seen. This opening resists depiction. Indeed, the attempt to speak of it becomes embodied in the most complicated abstrusities in order to let this quite simple thing - which is no thing at all - show itself and become manifest." (20) Such may be said of being in general, and Heidegger's abstrusity arises from his attempts as an academic (rather than as a novelist or playwright) to depict that which cannot be conceptualised except by analogy.

Like many other existentialists, Heidegger disavowed the label (since to acknowledge it would perhaps put him in company he would rather do without) but it is apparent that his abiding themes were also those of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and the like. He differs from these two in that, as Warnock says, " he was a system-builder in the Hegelian mould." (21) And like Hegel, he pushes language to the limits of communicability. It is from Heidegger, however, that the

European school of existential psychology and psychotherapy has derived its theoretical and conceptual foundation.

Heidegger's main pre-occupation is the matter of being. Warnock states that it is difficult to ascertain (from Heidegger's works) what the problem is with any measure of exactitude. In the sense that Heidegger's style and subject matter is far-removed from the British tradition of language analysis, the above assertion is true. However, it is not so much that there is no problem but rather that the nature of the questions posed , for example: "why is there something rather than nothing?"; "what does it mean 'to be'?"; "what does it mean to say "I am"?" make them difficult to conceptualise in any immediately satisfying manner. However, to return to being.

Krell (1978) maintains that by 1922 Heidegger had achieved a number of principle insights which could aid him in his explication of the nature of being:

(1) His phenomenological training under Husserl had developed in him an "allegiance to the things themselves";

(2) Truth, rather than being a function of "correctness" or correspondence of things with assertions about them, was the unconcealment of self-showing that made it possible for things to be the

objects of statements or assertions in the first place.

(3) Truth as unconcealment indicated the presence (which is in time as well as space) of a thing as a vital factor. Thus, the meaning of being required an analysis of time. Being and time are inextricably linked.

Heidegger saw that it was the investigation of the being who could raise questions about his own being that would pave the way for an analysis of Being in general. An individual who already has some understanding of Being through his ability to question his own being is given the designation "Dasein", by Heidegger. Thus Heidegger is led to an analysis of the modes of being of Dasein, which is Man. Heidegger is not concerned to reduce Dasein, and thus explain him, as some would have it, but to describe the manner of existence of Dasein. Dasein is always projecting into the future. It is always becoming what it, at the moment, is not. At the same time, it has a past over which there is no control. Thus Dasein must deal with the "throwness" of its own existence; the way in which it is projected out of the past, its history. That we are greatly influenced by forces out of our past, both genetic and environmental, (including historical), is indicated by the term "facticity". As well as past and future the present influences Dasein in that it may become caught up in matters of moment, or Verfallen (ensnared). Always a

human is projecting into the future, bearing the weight of his past, and dealing in some way or other, varying from decisiveness to drifting in the present. As well as Time, the concept of Death is important to Heidegger's analysis. It is a type of benchmark or horizon, which puts a perspective on life. Death ends all possibilities and enables an evaluation of life. If I die tomorrow can I say my life has been worthwhile - had meaning etc ?

Warnock (1967) is puzzled by the question of Being. What exactly is the problem? It is this, would say Heidegger: For the existing individual, capable of reflecting on his own existence, the very fact that he is, constitutes, if not a problem in the negative sense, then at least a profound puzzle. Why do we exist? The asking of causal explanations is a habit taken from the nature of our usual commerce with the world, and may not be ultimately fruitful in regard to questions of our own existence. However, it cannot be denied that we have the tendency to pose such questions. Why should we live moral or useful or socially acceptable lives, when, as being capable of imagining the future, we can envisage our own deaths and the negation of all we have done? Humans seek meaning both provisional and ultimate. We may deny that there is any ultimate meaning, but few are likely to admit the possibilty that their everyday existence and affairs have not one iota of meaning or

consequence. It is our striving to seek and create meaning in the light of our knowledge of the world, that constitutes the question of being.

It is from Heidegger that the notions of authenticity and inauthenticity are taken. How one may live authentically requires an explanation of Heidegger's distinction between "existentiell" and "existential" understanding. " Existence is decided only by each Dasein itself, in the manner of seizing upon or neglecting ... possibilities. We come to terms with the question of existence always only through existence itself - this kind of understanding of itself is existentiell understanding. The question of existence is an ontic affair of Dasein." (22) (Thus Dasein is to be discriminated from other beings by the very fact that one of its characteristics is to pose for itself the ontological question - the question of Being.) "For this theoretical perspicuity of the ontological structure of existence is not necessary (i.e., we do not need to understand what being "is"). The question of structures aims at an analysis of what constitutes existence. We shall call the coherence of these structures "existentiality". Analysis does not have the character of an existentiell understanding, but rather an existential one."(23) Heidegger uses the term "existentiell" here to characterise the different ways

in which Dasein may live its life - its different modes of existence, as "parent", "employee", "member of the team", etc., and in these modes it is capable of ignoring or realising its own possibilities. One such possibility is to inquire into the structure of its own life and possibilities. The kind of understanding thereby gained Heidegger calls "existential".

To become so deeply immersed in ones role that one's orientation, e.g., to one's wife and family is through the role of company executive, is to live inauthentically. Sartre was later to say that we are all incapable of escaping this condition entirely and on the basis of the definition this seems likely to be true. We are apt to fall into the roles we are called upon to play and become enmeshed in them. It would seem however, that even in playing a role it is possible to remain aware of its provisional nature. Such awareness is a pre-condition for an authentic life. Although stylistically far apart, Heidegger's likenesses to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in matters of theme is apparent.

The way in which Heidegger philosophizes, which is quite unlike, for instance, the British style of linguistic analysis, derives from what he sees as the philosopher's task. "For the existentialist it is not the task of philosophy to provide a final and

comprehensive explanation of everything, as though the various natural sciences explain particular bits of reality, while philosophy, like some kind of super-science explains the whole of reality. Rather, the task of philosophy is to re-discover and make explicit that elusive and primordial realm of experience that underlies the whole of our existence in the world."(24) Heidegger argues that we need to cultivate a new way of thinking - a kind of "meditative, almost passive, prayerful stance before "being" - so that reality reveals or discloses itself to us in all its unpredictable variety and richness." (24) Thus, for Heidegger, philosophizing is not a matter of proving such and such by means of a water-tight argument. Rather "in philosophy I cannot prove anything to you, but I think I can show you some things."

S A R T R E

Sartre, who Laing, Cooper and others have acknowledged as influential to their thinking, took human freedom as his major concept. Although he was persuaded to narrow somewhat the scope of this freedom from that contained in his earlier works, he always maintains that we essentially make ourselves. Talking

about his analysis of Freudian and Marxist thought, Sartre says "I have tried to do the following.... to indicate the limit of psychoanalytical and marxist interpretations and to demonstrate that freedom alone can account for a person in his totality, to show his freedom at grips with destiny, crushed at first by its mischances, then turning upon them and digesting them little by little, to prove that genius is not a gift but the way out that one invents in desperate cases." (25)

The basis of human freedom is self-reflecting consciousness, and imagination. These capacities enable us to go beyond merely what is; to conceive of what is not yet the case. Sartre's analysis of consciousness leads to an eventual dualism which splits consciousness off from things, and by logical extension, man from the world. "If we assume a consciousness placed in the very bosom of the world, as one existent among others, we must conceive it, hypothetically as completely subjected to the action of a variety of realities - without its being able to transcend the detail of these realities, by an intuition that would embrace their totality. This consciousness could therefore contain only real modifications aroused by real actions, and all imagination would be prohibited to it, exactly in the degree to which it was involved in the real. The conception of imagination enmired in the world is not

unknown to us, since it is precisely that of psychological determinism." (26) We shall have more to say of determinism, psychological and otherwise, further on. Suffice to say that Sartre considered that consciousness could not be grounded in merely what is, since this would subject it to the supposed determinism of the natural world.

Devoid of the imaginative capacity, consciousness, for Sartre, was "crushed" in the world. Imagination takes us beyond what is given. This same ability, however, cuts man off from the world - the union that he is always trying to achieve, but which can never occur, according to Sartre. Because consciousness depends on standing aloof from the world, it can never be identical with that world, and therefore never know it, except as an object. The result of such a state of affairs is examined by Sartre in such novels as "Nausea", and "The Roads to Freedom" trilogy. In "Being and Nothingness" Sartre posits two dimensions of being:

(a) "en-soi" (being in itself): This is an approximate to the objective world. One might say the posssibilty of the objective world;

(b) "pour-soi" (being for itself): This is roughly equivalent to consciousness.

By means of a type of dialectical relation of the pour-soi to the en-soi, the former emerges as consciousness

oriented to an object world. By being acted on the en-soi emerges as the object world. The pour-soi (consciousness) apprehends that the en-soi (things) exists prior to itself and is at its base. Things are here, and I am one thing among them. Thus is contingency (throwness or facticity in Heidegger) characterised.

Sartre's indication of how consciousness could arise in the first place, given that it is at great remove from "things" is difficult to support since he seems almost, at times, to be invoking vitalism, or else he is contradicting himself by giving to things that which he says they cannot possess, namely, imagination. "The emergence of consciousness in this contingent world refers indeed to the effort of an en-soi to found itself; it corresponds to an attempt on the part of being to remove contingency from its being. The for-itself originates in a revolt of the en-soi, which nihilates itself against its contingency." (27)

It is from this "split" between consciousness and objects that the basic human project arises. As Sartre would have it, all human projects are variations on this single theme. Perhaps this project is, at first, best characterised if we state that man is lonely in the world. His imagination, which frees him from things, also cuts him adrift from an existence to which he, at one level, very much belongs. We wish to belong to the

world, and for the world to belong to us. Sartre points out that the concept of "god" entails this mode of being. Our project is thus to be god; to unite the en-soi with the pour-soi. According to the logic of Sartre's analysis, such a synthesis is impossible. We are always cast back on ourselves. The world arises from the negation of consciousness "tearing itself away" from what merely is. Consciousness is necessarily separated from objects by a chasm. The chasm not only separates both, but indeed makes both possible. There can be no union of the perceiver with what is perceived, since such a union would annihilate both. The impossibility of uniting the en-soi and the pour-soi modes of being is related to Sartre's notion of inauthenticity, or "bad faith" ("mauvaise foi").

To imagine that one has become identical with some role, object or position, is to fall into bad faith. This necessarily entails a surrender of freedom. "Bad faith is self-deception; specifically, the attempt to be something as if in a thing-like manner, as if I were an in-itself - as when I try to be this or that or indeed, to be a sincere person, as if any of these were a condition I could absorb." (28) Sartre is implying that it is the nature of a human being to be in a constant state of flux. Answers given to the question "Who are you?" or "What sort of person are you?", can only be

provisional or valid in a limited time span. It is rather like asking "What shape are clouds?" One cannot truthfully say that one is an honest person, for example, since, according to Sartre, the concept of honesty entails the notion of its opposite. We can only say "honest" if we have some sort of criterion for judging what "honest" is not. Therefore, the idea "honest" presupposes the idea of "dishonest".

Consciousness is an unending process of creating and projecting onto the world what is not, in terms of new goals, ideas, and ways of being. Bad faith is an attempt to crystallise the fluid reality of existence, mainly for reasons of security of self. (This will be further discussed in Chapter 3). As mentioned earlier, Sartre is of the opinion that bad faith, as he conceives it, is a trap into which all must fall. The jaws of the trap are made up of our concepts and values. The knowledge of the idea "bad faith" entails a notion of what is not - sincerity. Yet to be "sincere" is itself to act in bad faith. This entails a reifying of sincerity, as if one could stop and say "Now I am sincere, and if I cease to move from this (metaphorical) spot, I will remain sincere." It seems that Sartre is implying that an overdose of self-reflection leads to bad faith. He puts this succinctly as follows: "It is bad faith for the for-itself (consciousness) to try to

be what it is, because it is as being the being which is what it is not, and which is not what it is, that the for-itself projects what it is." (29)

The fluidity of being, so implied, necessitates a spontaneity that is usually found in small children, who do not see themselves through the eyes of others, and only rarely in adults. Thus Sartre at first denies any possibility of a union between consciousness and objects, except in the spurious union achieved in bad faith. This impossibility proceeds logically from his analytical division of being. However, he does, later, allow that the en-soi/pour-soi fusion may occur, namely, in reading. "The basic ontological fact is that consciousness exists only through detaching itself from being, but in reading I bring this process to a momentary stop. I attain a transcendental and absolute end, which, for a moment, suspends the utilitarian round of end-means and means-end." (30) This is a rather curious about-face, and perhaps reflects Sartre's literary biasses, and his great passion for the well-turned phrase. In reading, according to Sartre, consciousness may be stopped, in the sense that it does not immediately detach itself from what is in consciousness. Why this should be possible in the act of reading, as opposed to watching a movie, or staring out of the window, doesn't seem obvious. As well as this,

Sartre's admittance of an exception, no doubt taken from his own experience, calls into question the validity of his so-called "basic ontological fact". An abiding theme in Sartre's novels and plays is the alienation of humans from each other and the world. Sartre seeks to establish the basis of this alienation in a division of being. We are alone because we are conscious beings, and consciousness entails detachment and objectification. Save for the writings of Meister Eckhart, and other christian mystics, there is little written on this subject of the union of consciousness and the world in the western traditions. Various recent accounts would include those of Blaise Pascal, Aldous Huxley, Arthur Koestler (decidedly not a mystic), Freud (his "oceanic feeling") and Maslow ("peak experience"). However we need not pursue this line of inquiry. Suffice to say that it is Sartre's concepts of freedom, bad faith, engagement, and his ideas of our modes of being, that interest us most.

M E R L E A U - P O N T Y

Merleau-Ponty, the last existentialist we shall consider in this overview, seeks to provide a way out of the blind alley posed by the strict subject/object dichotomy of much traditional philosophy, and that of Sartre's ontological analysis. Basically, he steers a

middle path between historical/environmental determinism (eg., Marx) and a largely idealistic and unsupportable theory of individual freedom (eg., Sartre).

Empiricism, according to Merleau-Ponty, erroneously treats things as if they were simply there; facts, which are independent of the perceiver and the moment of perception. Idealism adopts the opposite tack, of placing absolute reality in the subject. A strict empiricism eliminates any possibility of even a limited freedom of initiative and responsibility (in fact "responsibility" has no meaning in a deterministic world). Idealism, and Merleau-Ponty here includes some phenomenological interpretations, so thoroughly cuts the perceiver free from the world, that no reasonable amount of (eg.,) error, opinion, or historical influences, can be given.

Merleau-Ponty was influenced by the gestalt psychologists to some extent. He concluded, in short, that no experience can be regarded as an isolated en-soi. "Every new experience must de-center the dynamic unity of experience, to make a place for itself. Every part can exercise an influence over the whole, as any change in the whole can change the sense of the moment." (31) Merleau-Ponty proposes an idea of experiental reality which he terms "en soi pour nous" ([things] in themselves for us), which encompasses the concept of a

unified reality and an interdependence of things and consciousness. Those who posit strict empiricism or idealism, do so, Merleau-Ponty maintains, because they take as proven the effect that the "exterior can have on the self as causality". Sartre, for example, rejects a fusion of things and consciousness, because he assumes that causality is operative and would play a determining role in consciousness.

To eliminate the absolute subject/object duality, and yet maintain a degree of individual freedom, Merleau-Ponty uses his idea of "motivation", as opposed to causality. Causality is, he says, a product of objectivising thought. It is not "something primordially experienced." (32) Rather, genetic and historical factors provide "resistances in the field of experience" which solicit and provoke, rather than form my interpretations, calling forth a gamut of possible interpretations and contexts according to which they will only then become more determined. Nothing is entirely forign to us, Merleau-Ponty would assert, in contrast to Sartre. The very fact that we can perceive an object necessitates that we are "open" to it in some way. That is, that we have the capacity to construe it as we do. "All solicitations or obstacles I may find in my world need this world to appear at all, and must derive their sense ultimately from the capacity to

structure which I bring to the perceptive act; they present themselves more as intentions, potential vectors, invitations to action than as unequivocal objects or absolute determinations." (33) Merleau-Ponty arrives at these conclusions by his analysis of perception. He asserts that belief in a supposed subject/object dichotomy is merely the result of an unreflective commonsense view of the world, and does not characterise the actual state of affairs. To maintain a consciousness-versus-world split is unproductive, he contends, since it leads to empiricism,* or idealism, neither of which adequately describe the experience of being in the world, which is one neither of determinism nor of unlimited freedom. It may be countered on the empiricist side, that our ignorance of the exact nature of causality and a lack of data leads us to assume a degree of freedom which does not actually exist and which could be explained causally if such data were available. This shall not be discussed at present, but suffice to say that the theories of

* This is not to deny that the methods of empirical science are useful or that they are incapable of developing knowledge of a high degree of truthfulness. It is the uncritical faith in the scientific method, which is itself not without bias, which Merleau-Ponty is critical of.

causality (especially its universality) and strict determinism, are by no means as solid as once they seemed. (See references to Popper in Chapter III).

CHAPTER II

EXISTENTIALISM AND NATURAL SCIENCE PSYCHOLOGY

Existentialists do not see as their task the providing of a world-explaining unity. "Rather, the task of philosophy is to re-discover and make explicit that elusive and primordial realm of experience that underlies the whole of our existence in the world." (1)

Existentialism has its roots in central Europe and has exerted little influence over the British schools of philosophy, which have, for the most part, been dominated by the "movement of linguistic analysis," (2) which is strongly empirical and positivist, and "takes scientific knowledge as central and paradigmatic; and other forms of knowledge are assessed by reference to it." (3) Charlesworth sees English scientific philosophy as being bound to the "enlightenment ideal of rationality." Carroll (1974) claims that English philosophy is provincial and irrelevant to man, in that it has abandoned social and ethical concerns in favour of abstract linguistic analysis.

The relationship between existentialism and British empiricist philosophy parallels, largely, the relationship, within psychology, of existentialism to what we shall call, for the sake of differentiation, positivist psychology. This latter term is meant to signify that orientation to psychology which sees the study of man as being an extension of the natural sciences. Just as a large number of British and American philosophers find the existentialists decidedly unrigorous, and often obfuscating, the positivist psychologists see, in existential psychology, an "unscientific" and therefore, inadmissible approach to the subject matter.

If we are to assess the role of existentialism in psychology, then we must also make it clear what it is that psychology aims to elucidate. It is the fact that different people have somewhat differing views as to what psychologists are trying to do, which allows them to see a negative, positive, or no role for existentialism in psychology. If we consider the usual definition of psychology as the study of human behaviour, we must further ask what differentiates a psychologist from a physiologist, biologist, or anthropologist? It is considered by this writer that it is the recognition of man's conscious, self-reflecting and thinking dimension, that differentiates psychology from the afore-mentioned endeavours.

Saint-Simon and Comte are usually allowed the honour of initiating the extension of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of man. This positivism views man as an object to be studied, and the aims of this study, in keeping with the aims of the natural sciences, are prediction and control.

Many would be unhappy with the notion that consciousness is vital to psychology, but, if we are to base a study of man on colourless reflex, (Hull) then psychology is by no means unique and would appear to be reducible to physiology. At present many of even the most dedicated behaviourists see fit to introduce a cognitive element into their explanations of human behaviour, although the tendency to utilise the concept of stimulus-response at neurophysiological levels, introduces into their accounts more epicycles than a medieval astronomer could comfortably entertain. It is not intended to introduce what may be seen as an artificial dichotomy here. Psychological theories and psychologists are not, en masse, hostile to the concepts of mind and consciousness, and existentialists are not holding the fort alone against a scientific assault on humanness. It may seem that to set up the behaviourist position as the model for twentieth century psychology is to construct a straw man. Outside of personality theory, however, the point of view of the subject or the notion of consciousness has not largely played a role in

psychological theory and experimentation since Watson. Despite recent advances in neurophysiology, psycholinguistics, and cognitive psychology, the ubiquity of the behaviourist programme and a widespread acceptance of the behaviorists' positivist criteria of method and truth means that the influence of behaviourism goes far beyond, in psychology, those who would see themselves as behaviourists in the Skinnerian sense.

Koch (1964) has pointed out that the positivist framework which was adopted by the behaviourists was long ago given up by its inventors as being either untenable or fruitless, but has still maintained its hold in psychology. Behavioural positivism gained its popularity due to its methodology, which appeared to provide useful guidelines to an experimental science barely yet begun and wanting to foot it with the established natural sciences. "....but the practice of scientific method now beginning to emerge among physicists etc. challenges the behavioural conception of science, and the imported methodological view on which it was based, at virtually every point." (4)

Koch (5) makes a detailed critique of behaviourism, but we will consider just a few points:

(1) A major part of the behaviourist programme was the assertion that replication and reliability etc were based on "fixed linkages with objective indicators."

Rules are said to govern the construction, use and testing of a theory. These rules are able to be - must be - thoroughly articulated. However, it has long been acknowledged (in other fields), that this idea of full formalization is untenable. Scientific advancement depends on, among other things, "individual sensibility, discrimination, judgement and guess."

(2) "Analysis of the nature of logical and mathematical systems has revealed new complexities; few would be content now with the view that regards formal statements as tautologies." This would call into question the usefulness of the concept of reinforcement, since this is defined as that which will increase the likelihood that a behaviour will occur in the future. Behaviour is said to be under the control of reinforcers. What are reinforcers? Things that contol behaviour. This is essentially tautological, and leaves unaddressed the question of why, for example, something should be a reinforcement for one person, and of no consequence to another.

(3) Positivist critiques of consciousness use the verifiability theory of meaning (i.e., the use of procedures to determine whether a statement is true or false. If no procedure could be carried out to determine the verifiablity of the statement "I made up my mind to go to the movies, so I went", then it would be said to be meaningless from the point of view of verifiability,

and therefore not open to scientific investigation.) as justification for ruling consciousness or mental states out of the bounds of psychological consideration. Koch points out that such criteria have fallen by the wayside. "More generally, attempts to state criteria which establish the limits of cognitive meaningfulness, are either given up as self-stultifying, or have become so liberalised as to make them compatible with certain classes of metaphysical statements." (6) Both Carnap, one of the most influential of the logical positivists, and P. W. Bridgeman, the originator of the procedure of operationalism, claim that "the first-person report is essential to significant operational analysis in principle and, in psychological and social contexts, mandatory in practice."

(4) The notion of public verifiability is not the all-or-nothing affair that the behaviourists insist that it be. Koch points out that the language communities in which scientific communication goes on, are often exceedingly small, due to specialisation, and the need for a "feeling" for the data, which only comes from long personal involvement in the field in question.

(5) Finally, the utility of that favourite psychological term, "behaviour", is called into question.What exactly, is behaviour, and does affixing this label to a phenomenon help us to understand what it is ? "The over-abstract character of the concept of

behaviour (and that of stimulus) tends finally to produce the illusion that a conceptually homogeneous set of lawful relationships has been achieved, or is achievable, in psychology." (7)

Existentialism is a human-centred mode of thought. In psychology this implies that all explanations of human action are to begin from the viewpoint of the individual as the pivotal locus of action and originator of meaning. Behavioural analysis, up to now, has often entailed attempts to reduce human phenomena to its simplest components. This is an approach reminiscent of the old atomistic idea of matter, and is obviously not compatible with the existential view.

The objection that many psychologists have to considering a (positive) role for existentialism in psychology is that if psychology is to maintain its status as an experimental science, then it cannot afford to incorporate mentalistic notions of causality, and even if it does include a cognitive component, this component must be explicable in terms of antecedent events. Thus, notions of future reference, teleological or finalistic interpretations, are considered inadmissible. Existential theorists, starting as they do their analysis of man from the experiencer's position, definitely regard conceptions of the future as being fundamental to the description of being-in-the-world. Heidegger is quite explicit on this point. Dasein

is the being who is always in the process of becoming what it is not.

Let us look therefore at the concept of explanation, with reference to the future. Teleological explanations entail reference, in the case of living beings, to ends and goals. Thus the notion of purpose is implicit. Teleology does not necessarily entail the argument from design; the notion that everything in the universe was designed by an omnipotent being to be put to use for man's good. Many theorists and researchers in the biological sciences especially assert that the explanations of the actions of living systems are made more intelligible by referring to their goals or purposes. Some, like Jacques Monod (1971), who employs the special category of "teleonomy" to describe the purposive striving of living systems to attain their full potentiality, see goal-direction even at the level of macro-molecules.

Thus, in answer to the question "Why is that person running a hundred miles a week?", the fact that he intends to run in the Boston Marathon would seem to provide important explanatory data. Teleological explanations have often been avoided, due to their misconception, it seems to this writer, as forces or influences acting backwards in time, and drawing the present towards themselves. However, once we include the idea of consciousness, even if this cannot be wholly

satisfactorily articulated, the idea of future reference does not seem at all mysterious. Quite apart from the striving of biological systems to achieve their full potential, consciousness, in the form we know it as humans, allows us to plan, to juggle conceptual and symbolic systems so as to plan for events in the future. One could counter, of course, that our options are only those that we have acquired, and that therefore our imaginings are determined by past events. Popper (1982), however, has demonstrated the spurious nature of scientific determinism, and to maintain that all future action may be seen in principle, by virtue of a perfect knowledge of the reinforcement history and relevant laws of behaviour is not only practically, but logically impossible.*

The behaviourist's programme of prediction and control has come to mean for them that these aims are not only desirable, but quite possible. Hence their determinist stance, which cannot allow for goal or purpose.

Perhaps a reasonable criticism of existentialism is that it does not readily lend itself to scientific investigation. It makes a number of assertions but it is not clear whether such assertions can be tested. This

* A summary of Popper's argument is in the appendix.

will remain the case as long as psychology adheres to the procrustean scientific criteria set forth by positivism.

It is apparent that consciousness and mind are central to the existential conception of being. Positivistic psychology has no use for such notions. Existential talk of characteristics such as self-awareness and consciousness as being "uniquely human" do not help. Positivists, and many others, see man as one animal among many others, and as such, he is amenable to study by methods relevant to the rest of the world of living (and for that case inanimate) matter. They do not find goals or purposes or consciousness to be useful concepts in studying animals, and therefore the same reasoning applies to human studies. Nor can they identify with many existential concepts, which seem only aimed at mystification and the maintenance of an anthropocentric view of the world. Sartre, in particular, has not been helpful to reconciliation, by his insistence that self-consciousness is an all-or-nothing affair belonging solely to humankind. This overlooks the possibility that there may be a continuum of consciousness, both in the animal world, within a developing human, and in a human adult at any given time.

Fault lies both with the positivist psychologists, who have not allowed a role for consciousness, and with the existentialists and humanists, who, motivated by a desire to remove man a little from the world of manipulable objects, have put him at too great a remove from nature. This is to oversimplify the case to some extent, but as an overview, this characterisation is, I believe, valid.

In an attempt to put psychology on firm empirical foundations, Watson elected to ignore the concepts of mind and consciousness, since they lacked explanatory usefulness, in his view. Skinner argues along the same lines. The environment acts upon the individual so as to elicit a response. Whether or not this response is incorporated into the individual's repertoire is a matter of its consequences for the individual; its reinforcement value. Thus the individual is essentially a passive recipient of environmental stimuli, and there is little or no conception of the human as a living being, who is inherently given to actively exploring, avoiding and changing his world. It may be considered that activeness does not imply a conscious purpose. Therefore the notion of consciousness could be disposed of with no loss of predictive or explanatory power. The existentialists utterly deny this. Man is distinguishable due to this very characteristic. Consciousness is not simply awareness but the ability to

have knowledge of oneself as a distinct entity, to be the subject at the centre of a world of experience. Notions such as activeness are implied in purpose, in particular, and in existential views in general (although existentialists confine themselves to the human realm.)

The positivist approach, which is clearly a variation on Descartes' formulation, is to assume no consciousness at the animal level, and to ignore it at the human level (since a moment of reflection would negate the possibility of denying it altogether). If consciousness or the nebulous cognitive component is allowed at the human level, this is identified with the action of neurons, and is said, in principle, to be reducible to S-R units, and therefore determinable. I will not repeat (Popper's) previous arguments contra determinism.

Koestler (1978) marshalls a great deal of support for his notion of an open-ended hierarchy of consciousness, which overcomes the stumbling block of an all-or-nothing concept of consciousness. His formulation is roughly this: consciousness is a matter of degree, which ranges, for instance, from deep sleep to dreams, to habitual (although sometimes complex) actions, to highly attentive awareness, to consciousness of our own awareness, and so forth. The "routinization" of familiar

skills means that such operations need not be accompanied by any great degree of consciousness, and is obviously of parsimonious value, but tends to turn us into automata if not held in check. Quantum leaps may be made fron one level of consciousness to another, in response to a challenge from without, or by a realisation that we have been "asleep". There is no clear mind/body boundary as Descartes held. The conceptual dichotomy of body as Democritean or Newtonian matter (matter itself has been de-materialised by modern physics) and mind as a sort of ethereal something, is regarded by Koestler as having a highly negative influence over psychological and other theorising.

Koestler's approach implies "a pluralistic instead of a dualistic view. The transformation of physical events into mental events, and vice versa, is effected not by a single leap over a single barrier, but by a whole series of steps up or down through the swing-gates of the multi-levelled hierarchy." (8) He uses the examples of hearing (upward) and speech (downward) to explain this hierarchical structure. "Mental" and "mechanical" are aspects which accompany actions at all levels of the hierarchy. The concept of complementarity from physics is taken as an analogy. This stems from the observation that the so-called elementary particles sometimes act like solid points of matter and sometimes

as waves, depending on the experimental arrangement. (It should also be mentoned that in such matter-waves there is no material which "waves". Koestler compares this to the vibration of a string in the absence of the string.)

Koestler's comments on consciousness also have implications for free will, which, like consciousness, is not an all-or-nothing affair, but is a matter of degree. The greater the degree of conscious awareness, the greater the degrees of freedom available. Determinism is seen to be untenable, not only at the quantum level, but also at the macro-level of human activity, where consciousness ever recedes before its own grasp.

At times we are capable of acting almost like automata, completely controlled by the contingencies of the environment. Skinner, especially, draws from this the unwarranted conclusion that all behaviour, and all human behaviour, is thus characterised. It may be said that this is unfair and that Skinner merely sees his methods as the most apposite way to characterise human behaviour. It is undeniable, however, that Skinner
(a) does not see the relevance of consciousness to the explanation of human behaviour; and
(b) in his scientific writings and models he maintains a strictly behavioural point of view which admits of no exceptions. It is almost an article of faith for Skinner

and his adherents that given all relevant historical data the prediction and control of behaviour is possible.

The human ability, stemming from the mode of self-conscious being, allows us, in the existential formulation, to perceive a greater number of "worlds" than are supposed by theories and practices which ignore consciousness. This is quite compatible with Koestler's hierarchical notions, although some existential writers (Sartre in particular) have maintained views of consciousness not wholly reconcilable with Koestler's fluid formulation. The imaginative capacity takes the human sphere of action far beyond what is given, although contingency can never be entirely severed. While certain contingencies may be severed, man is always in-the-world. This is an enduring theme of existentialism, and is often overlooked by critics, who charge that the existential psychologists have abandoned scientific and empirical practices in favor of some sort of idealistic humanism that sees man as the measure of all things. This is not the case. It has been the existentialists' aim since Kierkegaard to examine what it means to be a human, and what it means to have this knowledge.

In the area of consciousness, the formulations of phenomenology are vital to the existentialists. These find their way into existentialism via Husserl, and his

one-time pupil, Heidegger. Husserl sought, somewhat in the manner of Descartes, to establish a number of "unassailable truths", (9) by the phenomenological method. This consists in the direct apprehension of things, "before the process of conceptual thought or reconstruction via personal constructs sets in. A type of primordial contact with the world." (10) Central to this process is intentionality, which states that conscious acts do not merely take place in the head, but are directed to the outer world of objects - are inextricably linked to them.

As Warnock (1967) points out, the existentialists have taken up the idea of intentionality and the method of phenomenology, which insists on an intuitive understanding and description of the primordial experiences upon which all other knowledge of the world is based. However, Husserl's attempts to establish a base of unassailable truths are rejected by the existentialists. They see intentionality as a conceptual tool capable of undercutting the Cartesian subject/object dichotomy. Merleau-Ponty is a case in point. He is careful to emphasise the role of what is normally taken as the observer, while allowing that the "object" world exerts a strong influence. He has been critical of the phenomenologists for, what he sees as, the over-emphasis on the role of the subject. In the area of perception, phenomenology has, he claims, been

guilty of a subjectivism which denies that one could be in error about one's own perceptions. Obviously one can.

For Heidegger, phenomenology provided the tools with which he could undertake his study of Being. He saw phenomenology as a method for "uncovering", for letting what is, be seen. "Because phenomena, in the phenomenological understanding are always just what constitute Being, and furthermore because Being is always the Being of beings, we must first of all bring beings themselves forward in the right way, if we are to have any prospect of exposing Being. These beings must likewise show themselves in the way of access that genuinely belongs to them." (11) Phenomenology was the correct way, according to Heidegger, to "bring beings forward."

Edwin Boring (1963) considers that the behaviourists' rejection of consciousness was a case of "throwing the baby out with the bathwater." He objects to dualist formulations of mind and body since they get us no further than behaviourism (which ignored mind) or introspection (which ignored body). He asserts that "the correlation between consciousness and events in the brain shows no sign of yielding to insight because there is no conceivable way in which insights can transcend the dualistic gap between mind and matter." (12) This is similar to Koestler's formula that the self can never succeed in grasping itself entirely. Boring proposes,

based on what he sees as its heuristic advantages, an identity theory. As regards phemonenology, he rejects the contention that there can be any useful scientific significance in the concept of immediate experience. "There is not ever a private meaning to a sense datum, except as it is given in relation to some extrinsic frame of reference." (13) Now this must imply one of a number of things, it seems: (1) Consciousness is always consciousness of something. In this case, the phenomenological concept of intentionality anticipates Boring's criticisms;

(2) Private meaning cannot exist in a scientific sense, because to communicate one must rely on the "extrinsic", that is, shared, patterns of meaning and communication. Although Boring is critical of behaviourism, he invokes one of its principal dictates in his critique of phenomenology, namely that of public communicability and verification. Koch has clearly pointed out the dead-end to which such requirements lead. Scientific advances have been made by individuals who have, at first, been unable to place their findings in the context of a wholly understood "extrinsic frame of reference." Koch's notion of "language pools" captures the meaning of the fact that very often the procedures and implications of science are understood by very few people - only those that have immersed themselves in the language of the particular group. Who, even now, understands the phrase "space is curved"?

(3) If Boring means that our private experience can never be accurately articulated, that is, existentially, because we rely on essentialist, symbolic means of communication, then his preference for a mind/body identification seems paradoxical. However some existentialists would agree that he is correct on this point, Sartre especially. He developed whole works, for example "Nausea", on the theme that experience can never be captured. We cannot "become" what we are experiencing - consciousness, as he perceives it, tears us away continually from what is. Boring does not deny, I think, direct experience. What he does deny is that this direct experience can ever be communicated "as it is", since communication, he implies, involves the use of symbols and concepts, which can never be anything more than the shadows of the original experience. This overlooks the possibility of a commonly shared mode of "opening out onto the world", as Merleau-Ponty would have it, which we possess by virtue of our inherited means of apprehending the world. The fact that language may only imperfectly characterize experience does not cut us off from our fellow humans. I may "know what you mean" even though "it" hasn't been clearly set forth in symbolic terms. The continual development of idioms and slang in language seems to reflect the realisation that new experiences need new symbols to communicate them.

People who are "en rapport" may communicate by what appears to be the scantiest use of language. Boring's point is well made, as regards the difficulty of existential communication, however, there seems no point in ruling out of court the category of immediate experience, merely because it presents difficulties of characterisation, or because it is only open to approximations which can never be perfected. Science itself, Popper maintains, is always incomplete. Direct experience should not be denied a place in our calculations, merely because it resists all attempts to perfectly and finally symbolise it.

For Skinner, the goal of psychology is the prediction and control of behaviour. He reduces motives, reasons, goals and so forth to the datum of reinforcement-stimulus history. If this history is unknown, he says, then we can have no idea what a person's mental state may be, and have no right to make guesses or inferences as to what it might be. Asking the person is not scientifically valid, in the behaviouristic conception of scientific methodology taken from positivism. Quite apart from the arguments counter to positivism, and the fact that most of the progenitors have seen fit to radically modify or drop their former lines of thinking, there are less technical reasons for admitting the category of mental states, as Savin points out: "Skinner's dismissal of mental

states that are inferred from a subject's history is unconvincing. Consider, for a moment, the variety of states that on different occasions might figure in explanations of eating: we may eat because we are hungry, because we don't want to offend our hostess, because the doctor has ordered us to eat...such distinctions among states of mind are obviously critical for predicting subsequent behaviour - for predicting, for example, whether we will stop eating when the hostess leaves the room, when the doctor pronounces us cured..." (14)

The behaviourist school has attempted to do for the environment what Freud did for biology and instinct. Suffice to say that their approach has produced some useful results. However, it is obvious that the limitations of this perspective are considerable. In promising to develop a program and means of prediction and control, the behaviourist school, inadvertently or otherwise (a) would place psychology on a comparable level with the "hard" sciences, and thus become respectable in the scientific community, and (b) provide the tool for social and political agencies to bring stability in a century when stability is a rather rare commodity. Regardless of its degree of theoretical and methodological soundness, one gets the impression that behaviourism is clung to more for what it promises than for what it has elucidated about humans. One could

compare this to the status of the theory of evolution, based solely on random mutation and selection by fitness There are numerous limitations and glaring anomalies in the theory, but its central tenets are upheld, not because its leading proponents are unaware of its limitations, but because they lack suitable alternative theories. Evolutionary theory provided a way out of the stranglehold exerted over biology (and, by association, social and anthropological theory) by religious dogma. Evolutionary theory is not just a piece of science, but has obvious important social and cultural implications. Even from its inception, some of Darwin's important mechanisms were found to be wanting, yet such weaknesses were ignored. The reasons were obvious, I think. Once science had broken free from religion it, quite rightly, wasn't willing to put its head back into the halter: the difficulty is that any criticism of the theory may be perceived as an attack on the idea of the general validity of a scientific description of the development of the human race. (This is not far-fetched, as recent events in America have shown - evolution in schools etc) Likewise the criticism of behaviourism, or the attempt to introduce mind into psychology, is not an oblique attack on the idea of a scientific psychology. It is merely a pointing out that the scientific study of behaviour is lacking if it ignores consciousness, and the self-awareness capability of individuals.

Freud, in a conversation with Ludwig Binswanger, in reply to Binswanger's query as to why Freud had reduced man to drives, and left so little room for "spirit", replied that everyone, including he, knew that man had a spiritual dimension, but that he saw it as his task to explicate and investigate the instinctual side of human nature. (15) Freud's implication, that humans are not motivated solely by biology, is a somewhat different formulation from the biological determinism adopted by many of his followers. Thus may theory become dogma. It is not doubted that the environment (rightly or wrongly characterised as "out there") plays an important and sometimes dominant role in forming our actions. Behaviourism goes beyond the limits of its abstraction, however, when it states we are nothing more than the passive recipients of environmental directions.

White (1967) shows that the explanatory value of physiological and other causal (i.e., antecedent) explanations diminishes rapidly when we consider behaviour describable as "actions", rather than as "occurrences" or "happenings". "The same specific occurrence - playing the piano - may, or may not, on a given occasion, also be an instance of something polymorphously describable as, for example, practising for a concert, or giving a concert recital, or trying to annoy the neighbours: It is obvious that what counts as an explanation of so-and-so partly depends on the

description given of so-and-so. We can explain why a man is playing the piano by saying that he is practising, but we cannot explain his practising by saying he is playing the piano." (16) And again: "It is not the absence of some physiological component which makes it impossible for my right hand to give my left hand a present..." Rather, it is the meaning of "present", as something that one does not give to oneself, that makes this impossible. The existentialists emphasise consciousness and meaning as being principal attributes of human beings, and the failure to take such attributes into account leads to a paucity and shallowness that would prove fatal to psychology.

Koch, although thoroughly critical of behaviourism, regards the embracing of existentialist notions by psychologists as a retreat to an "answer", rather than a problem. Koch has the impression that existentialism is a method antithetical to empirical science, and which lays down unsupportable claims as to how the world is, without attempting to verify them. If that were true, his objection would be well-founded. He was writing at a time when existentialism was in vogue, thanks to the popularity of the works of Sartre and Camus. While they represent important threads, they cannot be said to be the whole tapestry. Nor would they themselves, I think, wish to be seen as presenting dogmatic assertions about this or that. Rather, in the tradition of

existentialism, their task was to continually question the nature of our systems. Such questioning would also address itself to science, which seeks to answer numerous questions of importance. A retreat into answers is the epitome of "bad faith", whether these "answers" be scientific, religious or political. Existentialism seems to accord with Popper's view that there can, from our perspective, be no final answers. Our nets* catch certain fish, but the gauge is too fine or too coarse for others. The utility of some of the concepts of existentialism will be examined in the next section, but it seems apparent, to this writer at least, that the general attitude - the thematic direction - of existentialism, is of value to a scientific appraisal of man. This includes the emphasis which it places on the shared attributes of consciousness, etc, and its assertion of a non-dogmatic approach to permissible questions, and the "answers" they supply. May (1959), among others, has called for a science of humans, by which he means one based on the (supposedly) unique

* This analogy is taken from Popper (1982). A net of infinitely fine gauge would represent an attempt to attain perfect knowledge in the manner of Laplace's demon. Popper gives reasons for the unattainability of such knowledge.

characteristics of humans. This human science contrasts somewhat with the character of the natural sciences.

Even many people with whom existentialism strikes some chord are hesitant to assert that its concepts could be scientifically useful, since they appear to be mostly untestable by empirical means, and therefore do not belong in the same class as scientific knowledge. Pompa (1982) assesses the work of Giambattiste Vico (1668-1744), a Neopolitain philospher who advocated a human science. Pompa's elucidation of Vico's work seems especially pertinent regarding the relationships of existentialism and science. It should be added that there appears to be no discernible link between Vico and the later existential writers. Vico maintained that: (a) our knowledge of humans could be as thoroughgoing and rigorous as our knowledge of the natural world, and (b) that a human science "involves an appeal to antecedent experiential knowledge of what it is to be human, which renders its products more intelligible than those of a purely natural science" (17) These two claims he did not see as incompatible. Thus he seeks to introduce, as scientific data, what would normally be barred as purely subjective knowledge.

The antecedent knowledge of which Vico speaks is gained through being human. For example, with the progressive development of cognitive and other capacities from infancy to adulthood, Vico successively

characterises humans as "imaginative and non-rational beings, semi-rational but excessively literal-minded beings, and finally, rational beings capable of understanding themselves and their world." (18) While this may be an over-simplification of intellectual and emotional development, Vico's drift is clear enough. Like the existentialists, he says that human knowledge of the above, for example, is acquired through the ability to self-reflect. We have some insight into the intellectual development of humans because we are human ourselves.

In response to the argument that such knowledge is not scientifically admissible, Pompa points out that science itself does not accept all accounts of human behaviour as equally credible, although they may fulfill the criteria of being objective and empirically falsifiable. We look only for certain types of explanations. "Thus a certain conception of the kind of explanation appropriate to a human science underlies the practice of social scientists." (19) Pompa claims that social scientists, historians and psychologists, it could be said, do not employ merely arbitrary definitions of man, in their theories and explanations. Rather, they already have some idea of what it is they wish to explain, and what sort of answer is intelligible for the question they have asked. This prior idea is the antecedent knowledge of which Vico speaks.

A human science would attempt to couch its explanations in terms of characteristics which are common and unique to humans. Based on the admissibility of experiential knowledge, one would therefore be able to say that a human science would find self-consciousness, creativity, anguish, meaning, and so on, to be indispensable conceptual tools. "Vico's claim is this: that the concept of a human science depends on our own conceptions of what it is to be human....A natural science, on the other hand, induces no such knowledge. Definitions and theories are, indeed, required, but these need satisfy only the purely formal and logical conditions required by the concept of a science. They need not satisfy the further conditions required by the concept of being human. A natural science thus operates under fewer restrictions than a human science, but it pays for this greater freedom by lacking the kind of intelligibility that is proper to anything we can truly recognise as human." (20)

May calls for a science of man based upon arguments similar to some already mentioned. He makes the useful observation that the "simple can only be understood in terms of the more complex." (21) The fact of the possession of self-consciousness by man alters the whole gestalt of his biological and social conditions and their effects. Thus man, as man, relates to the world through his self-consciousness. This is the eigenwelt ("I world") of which more mention shall be made below.

CHAPTER III

EXISTENTIALISM: SOME KEY CONCEPTS

In this section some of the key concepts of existentialism will be examined, especially as they relate to the practice of existential psychotherapy.

Just as many of the writers labelled as existentialists seem to have little in common bar a propensity to ask ontological questions, so too the therapists and psychologists of existentialism often bear little resemblance to each other. Ellenberger (1) makes a distinction between (1) Philosophical existentialism, which considers man's immediate experience; (2) Existential psychology, which was inspired by Heidegger, and which applies existential principles (i.e., ontological assumptions for the most part) without regard to phenomenology or psychoanalysis; and (3) Binswanger's Daseinanalysis, which is a synthesis of psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and existential concepts. It is apparent, then, that given this single consideration of Ellenberger's above, the rubric "existential psychologist" or therapist may count for numerous styles and approaches to counselling. It is

also apparent that the existentialists have managed to become aligned with the so-called Third Force Movement in psychology. This is principally a humanist viewpoint identified with such people as Maslow, Rogers and others. Although there is some resemblance between existentialism and this humanism, they are not identical by any means. They converge most where they speak of the uniqueness and worthwhileness of the individual, who is not to be treated as a simple collection of drives and impulses, nor as some statistical datum, and they diverge most where the usefulness of the natural science approach to human behaviour is examined. While Maslow may distance himself from behaviourism or psychoanalysis, his is still, basically, an objectifying technique. His desire is to discern essences, that is, traits, abilities and the like which make individuals what they are. The existentialists, on the other hand, are only concerned with what it is like to be human in general, and this or that human in particular.

To illustrate the way in which the existentialists conceive of particular psychological conditions, the concepts of anxiety and freedom will be examined from an existential perspective.

A N X I E T Y

As has already been mentioned, anxiety, according to the existentialists is an ontological category arising from the fact that since humans have the ability to reflect on their own being, they are also able to conceive of their absence - their non-being or death. This lends to life a quality which one may compare to that derived from hanging off the side of a mountain, as opposed to reading about it. In fact, the existentialists maintain that lack of this balancing feeling, of the nearness of death, is indicative of a deliberate misunderstanding or distorting of one's condition as a human. Human time is limited. Thus, if anything is to be completed to our satisfaction, it cannot be delayed forever.

Fear of death or anxiety about it are not to be taken as in any way abnormal. On the contrary, they stem from the correct understanding of the human situation. Various existential psychologists and psychiatrists have used this basic framework of anxiety to try to explain or understand various manifestations of abnormal or self-defeating anxiety. Ontological anxiety, in Laingian terms, for instance, refers to anxiety about one's own being, one's own identity. Laing observes that the ontologically insecure person "may feel more unreal than real" and only "precariously differentiated from the

rest of the world." (2) One sees shades of Sartre, who Laing acknowledges as a deep influence, in these descriptions. The consequence of this ontological insecurity for the individual is that his mode of being -the way he commerces with the rest of the world, and other people in particular - is radically altered. Most importantly, he experiences other people and situations as threatening rather than gratifying. His tenuous hold on an identity is continually challenged by others. Hence his life is reduced to a struggle to maintain a semblance of an idea of self. The individual acts from a highly unstable base, and most of his energy is devoted to shelving up this crumbling edifice, rather than developing any creative or satisfying relationship with the world and others. This type of individual has been well-portrayed in the film of Kurt Vonnegut's novel "Slaughterhouse Five", in the character Paul Lazzaro. His highly unstable sense of his own identity is betrayed by his continual aggression in the face of imagined insults and betrayals. The insecurity he experiences concerning his own existence leads him to be excessively sensitive about the correct spelling of his name, for instance. He finally attempts to achieve a measure of identity by an act of notoriety, namely the killing of a public figure, who, he imagines, killed his best, he would like to imagine, friend, by treading on his foot. Life for such an individual is essentially miserable.

Kemp (3) points out that most counselling psychologists distinguish normal from neurotic anxiety. The latter is differentiated from normal anxiety in that it is disproportionate to the objective threat, and may involve repression, intra-psychic conflict, and management by means of aggression, inhibition, symptom formation etc, and a retrenchment of anxiety and awareness. The existentialists take for granted an ontological anxiety that arises from a realisation of one's finitude. Tillich, according to Kemp (1971), sees existential anxiety as basic to all other forms of anxiety. In any anxiety-provoking situation, he says, it is the threat to one's own being which is the frightening factor. Anxiety as a conflict between being and non-being, is also inherent in change. The presentation of new possibilities may be experienced as threatening to present security since they involve letting go of what one already has, even if this is not particularly gratifying. Better the devil we know, as the saying goes. While some make a sharp distinction between existential and neurotic anxiety, Tillich, at least, sees neurotic forms as based on the ontological form. In this case, neurotic behaviour is essentially an attempted escape from an all-pervasive anxiety into illusions of stability. Laing's conception of the schizoid individual, as that person experiences himself, is one of chronic anxiety over his own being. Thus, the

behaviour of the person, while objectively labelled as "mad" is not inconsistent with his view of the world. The behaviour of such an individual may be bizarre, but it does have its own rules. Laing is not making the assertion that the so-called "deranged" individuals have any better insight into themselves or others or life in general than the rest of us. Rather, he is saying that their actions have meaning given that they view the world in a certain way.

For Laing, the fact that death brings an abrupt end to all endeavours, is mitigated somewhat by ontological security. It is not so bad to know that one will die, provided that while one is alive one can act spontaneously and freely in the sure knowldge of one's own existence and worth. The worst that can befall a person is that he believes himself to be a mere chimera, never really experiencing the diversity of life, since he is busy building walls, within which to protect his threatened identity.

Laing describes three types of anxiety experienced by the ontologically insecure person:

(A) ENGULFMENT:" A firm sense of one's own autonomous identity is required in order that one may relate as one human being to another. Otherwise any and every relationship threatens the individual with loss of identity." (4) The individual fears that a relationship will engulf and destroy his tenuous identity.

"Engulfment is felt as a risk in being understood (thus grasped, comprehended), in being loved, or even simply in being seen." (5) Isolation is likely to be employed as a defence against threat of engulfment. One can see again the effect of Sartre on Laing's thought. Sartre asserted that there is a human tendency to objectify others in terms of the role they play, and thus, in some measure, to reduce them to that role. The defensive reaction of the ontologically insecure person threatened with engulfment is perhaps an unconscious realisation of this. His sense of self is so weak that he intuitively recognises that any role other than the one he chooses for himself is likely to overwhelm him.

(B) IMPLOSION: The individual feels himself to be empty. He fears a "rushing in" of the world, which would crush any identity he has. Thus, any contact with reality is feared.

(C) PETRIFICATION AND DEPERSONALISATION: A person finds the experience of others as overwhelming to the identity. The person is literally impoverished by contact with other people. In contrast to his own nebulous perceptions of self-identity, this person experiences others as too real; overawing and crushing. Laing in "The Divided Self" does not delve into questions of causation. And it is not intended here to discuss such matters. His bias towards an existential interpretation of schizophrenic and psychotic experience

stems from his belief that this is a method for apprehending the individual in his own world, and that it does not raise up between the individual and the therapist an invisible barrier of theory. The therapist is not constrained to place the client on the proverbial rack to make him fit a theoretical model. Therapy is dependent on communication for its success, and if the participants can find no common wave length, then the process is bound to fail. Laing makes it clear that accepting the patient's existential experience is not the same as validating it as normal or healthy. The usefulness of an existential approach is that the often bizarre, frightening, or apparently nonsensical behaviour of psychotic or schizophrenic individuals is placed in the context of the individual's own existential experience, their own beliefs about how the world and they are structured, and how they should therefore act.

May (Stein, 1960), along with others such as Camus, believes that we live in an age when anxiety is endemic, not only the ontological anxiety engendered by knowledge of our condition, but an anxiety arising from an impoverishment of life and relationships. "What has been lost is the capacity to experience and have faith in oneself as a worthy and unique being, and at the same time the capacity for faith in and meaningful communication with other selves, namely our fellow men." (6) It is possible, of course, that man has so

successfully rid himself of his illusions that he may, quite correctly, see himself as worthless, one among millions, and his communication as generally banal. This is a value judgement, of course, but it must be allowed the same due as that accorded other such judgements, like May's, which assert that man is worthy, unique, and so on. Given that such diverging values can be ascribed to life, it becomes apparent that life's meaning is not given; but is derived from its mode of execution. It is how you do it that counts. May quotes Tillich (7) to the effect that principally the threat of non-being is the threat of realisation of the meaninglessness of one's existence. Man can find a reason for the existence of most things: tools for their utility, animals for the function they fulfill in the ecological system, but he is unable to find an unequivocal reason for himself.*

* It is reasonable to assume that many or most people do not feel confronted at all times by the question of life's meaning. The universality of the existentialist's assertions regarding anxiety would seem open to doubt. Their not entirely satisfactory rejoinder would be that awareness of the true human condition (finitude, death etc.) is self-deception. It is obvious that the existentialists have certain ideas of what constitutes true human modes of existence, and that they could not or would not deny that their thinking is value-laden.

Frieda Fromm-Riechmann points out that Freud said: "...mental symptoms are at the same time both the expression of unbearable anxiety and the means of warding it off...anxiety in its milder forms is a universal human phenomenon." (8) The existentialists are not alone, therefore, when they assert that anxiety is common to all humans. Fromm-Riechmann, however, maintains that there is a clear difference between healthy and unhealthy anxiety. "Nearly all psychological concepts of anxiety have in common with Freud and Sullivan this one basic conception: that anxiety is tied up with the inner danger of unacceptable thoughts, feelings, wishes or drives, which elicit the expectation of loss of love or approval, or of punishment." (9)

If it is taken that one's sense of self is in part a reflection of love and approval from significant others, then any such loss can be seen as a threat to being. The existentialists, in this regard, have merely widened the scope of anxiety.

Although Tillich is of the opinion that the threat of non-being is at the heart of all anxiety, it seems at first doubtful that meaninglessness is at the basis of, say, anxiety over an athletic performance. Threat to the self, however, does not merely imply a danger to the bodily self, but also to ideas of self-worth, or what is loosely called the ego - a sort of ensemble of self-images attained from experience, expectation of self and

others, and other influences. Most mystical writers hold that this ego is an illusory and confining medium of communication with the world - its influence on the behaviour of people, however, cannot be understated. Therefore, one may include threat to the ego - one's ideas about oneself - as threats to being. Slusher (1967) asserts that anxiety develops from a need for ego fulfillment, and self-realisation. It does not come from the situation as it is. He is speaking here of sports-related anxiety, where there is little risk of damage, in the sense that one might be killed. If the body is quite safe, then it is apparent that the person is anxious for some other reason, namely, to keep intact the meanings which he assigns to himself, and which he has let others assign to him. Thus viewed, Tillich's assertion that anxiety arises from the threat of incipient meaninglessness, seems a reasonable one.

When one considers the differences between neurotic and ontological anxiety, between being and ego, the existential position becomes a little difficult to locate with any degree of accuracy. Can there, for example, be any such thing as neurotic anxiety, in the existential view, given that Tillich sees anxiety as the threat of meaninglessness? Perhaps the key to the distinction lies in the unstated idea that it is the socially derived ego, and the attempts to preserve and bolster it, which constitutes neurotic behaviour.

Neurotic anxiety would then be seen as anxiety over the protection of a largely contingent and relative phenomenon. Laing sees anxiety as resulting from threat to the sense of identity or existence. Psychotic or schizoid individuals, according to Laing, are under constant threat to their identity, and their unusual behaviour and world-views are attempts to maintain the integrity of a self-system. Sensing what they would lose in everyday normal life, they play their own games, where the rules are suited, designed, for their survival.

Neurotic anxiety, on the other hand, is largely imaginary, not in the above sense of being sharply divorced from what is generally agreed upon as reality, but in the sense that it is relative and contingent, being the product of upbringing and socialisation. Anxiety, in this sense, is inauthentic, or stemming from bad faith, to use Sartre's terminology. It is not centred in a person's being, but stems from a desire to conform to the expectations of others. The sense of being is so poorly developed that only the approval of others may render the person real to himself. His main communication with the world is through the socially contingent ego. Laing has observed that people who have poorly developed ideas of their own existence have such because they were largely ignored in childhood, or treated as worthless, or made to feel they would be

pleasing their parents (usually) if they actually did not exist - had never been born. So while an overly contingent sense of "I" may aid in developing neurotic behaviour, it appears that at some stage healthy development is dependent on being noticed by others, and being accorded positive regard. Actually, in Laing's analysis, it is better to be maltreated than to be totally ignored.

Nevertheless, if an individual is made to feel that positive regard is dependent on his acting in a particular fashion, dressing in a certain way and so on, then he lives through his ego. This description would just about cover the entire species. But it seems reasonable when one considers the vast array of obvious and subtle means by which we become conditioned to parental and social approval. It can reasonably be conjectured that different people undergo diferent levels of this socialization, and that those most socialised are also most likely to become neurotic provided that alternatives to approved behaviour become available. It has been speculated that more women than men form neuroses, because they are more often expected to conform to prescribed patterns of behaviour. They cannot "be" as they see fit. Rather, to maintain social acceptability, they must fulfill the role patterns already laid down. For example, anorexia nervosa appears to represent an extreme attempt to conform to the ideal of physical slimness.

It seems clear that man does not think of himself as just a physical entity. On the contrary, he maintains various beliefs and values which are attached to his ego. Possible failure to live up to beliefs and standards that the person has about himself constitute a threat to who he thinks he is, or, more precisely, what he thinks he is. The inability to see through the contingent nature of this acquired ego may lead to neurotic anxiety. A distinction is made between the sense of being which is largely spontaneous, and a sense of ego, which is primarily an acquired set of behaviours adapted in response to the expectations of family, peers and culture.

An existential analysis of neurotic anxiety has the advantage of elucidating the reasons why a person reacts to a situation as if it threatens his being. To him it does. Neurotic anxiety is not objectively valid, in that, to an observer, no real threat can be said to exist. However, the existential therapists, because they concentrate on the lived experience of the individual, are bound to consider what the implications of neurotic anxiety are. Slusher paraphrases the point made by many existential writers when he says that "it seems that anxiety reappears whenever man is faced with living up to his potential." (11) In the existential schema man is intrinsically free, but he must exercise that freedom at the price of anxiety. Whenever a person is faced with

the possibility of being free, anxiety arises. For a person who may be characterised as overly socialised and conforming, the degree and frequency of anxiety is abnormally high. Neurotic behaviours are unconscious or partly conscious attempts to allay anxiety by conforming to behavioural patterns that will put off any decision to make a free choice, or even to avoid the situation where a free, and therefore anxiety-provoking choice will have to be made.

Rules and systems of behaviour and ethics clearly diminish anxiety. Who could drive along a busy thoroughfare in the absence of road rules? Religious and secular codes of conduct conceivably derive much of their appeal from the diminishment of anxiety they afford. The anxiety arising from free choice does not occur when one can believe that there is only one way to act, that is, according to the Word. This is not to imply that a religious person does not experience anxiety. In the case of the believer, his anxiety is likely to arise from doubts he has, and his expectation that his faith is not sufficiently strong to keep him from falling from grace, therby inviting the disapproval of the deity, and possibily his fellow believers.

An existential look at anxiety concentrates on the mode of experience of the anxious person. Thus, to understand why a person is anxious, it is not sufficient, in this view, to be informed only of

objective external and physiological conditions. Only when it is known how the person construes his world can his anxiety be understood in anything other than a superficial manner. It goes without saying that self-reported states of consciousness, beliefs, and physical and emotional reactions, are all valued data, as far as an existential analysis is concerned.

F R E E D O M

"Man is free. This means he cannot be a coward in the same way that a table is a table. He may be a coward on some particular occasion, but every new occasion that presents itself offers him a completely clean sheet, to be a coward again, or to be a hero. Observe...the phrase "be a coward again" rather than "continue to be a coward". He may have acted like a coward on every occasion yet it is still not true to say he is a coward. He is free....for in his essence he has no qualities, he just is." (12) In a nutshell, the above is the existential position on human freedom. Primarily humans are free because they can choose to play any role they desire, and need not become bound to any one role. This is possibility, not necessarily actuality. However, even the possibility needs to be examined.

Sartre's conception of freedom requires an unremitting and almost total self-awareness. It is

apparent, however, that we only partially achieve this state. Man is not totally lucid in respect to himself and his motives. Sartre contends that each person chooses to be the way he is and that change is emminently possible. Man is free to be how he wishes, and to inject into any situation his own meaning for himself.

Merleau-Ponty, unlike Sartre, assumes that human freedom is limited in empirical ways. Whereas Sartre, in somewhat of an idealist fashion, sees man as condemned to being free, and as possessing absolute freedom, Merleau Ponty insists that man is not an abstraction. That is, each individual is free or not free, in regard to some concrete situation. "Our freedom is thus ambiguous. We are neither totally free, nor totally unfree, and we must find out the extent of our freedom for ourselves, in interaction with actual situations in which we are placed." (13) As has been stated, it is considered that Sartre presents an idealised concept of freedom. Sartre overlooks the "facticity" or "throwness" of the human situation, mentioned by Heidegger and others. Not only does our genetic and environmental situation help shape our actions, but also the very possibilities from which a person may choose.

Sartre holds that humans are free by virtue of their self-aware consciousness, which gives them the capability of transcending the immediate situation, of

envisaging what does not yet exist, and moving to create it. Man's essence, what makes man man, is that he has no essence. In every situation he has the possibility of choosing how he will live, how he will be in that situation.

What Sartre intends to say, in respect to creating every situation has nothing to do with playing a role, in the sense that an actor on the stage plays a role. This involves a degree of subterfuge, of dissembling, of acting in one way, while possibly holding views and emotions contrary to one's acts. Sartre would label this bad faith. Sartre seems to say that in any given situation one does not act aggressively or kindly or such, one is aggressive, is kind, and so on. This rather illustrates Sartre's idealistic stance. For instance, if one is aggressive to X on occasion T1, but decides to be kind at T2, then simply being kind may not be so simple. The vestigial aggression, memories, emotions, and reasons for them, may promote a situation where one is fraught with conflicting emotions. It is the apparent fact that human consciousness is a multi-level phenomenon, that casts doubts on the validity of Sartre's position. He fails to take into account the inertial effects of our corporality. In promoting the absoluteness of human freedom, Sartre sought to annihilate the Freudian doctrine of biological determinism. This may explain his tendency to disallow

any notion that our freedom may in any way be complicated or compromised by unconscious factors. It may be said that Sartre conceives of man at his best, how he can be, not necessarily how he is. The fact that he is not always at his best may not, furthermore, be his own fault, in the sense that he is acting in bad faith. To say that bad faith is a choice of action necessitates that self-awareness is equal in all people, and at all times.

Many of our actions hardly reach the level where a conscious decision is made to act or not to act. Skills once mastered are handed over to lower levels of consciousness, where whole routines may be set off by one generalised command.* Not only motor or speech skills, but also emotions, may have sources which are scarcely discernible, to the narrow focus of consciousness. One may still contend, as Sartre says, that even given the subconscious influences, the decision to act is conscious, and that, in the last

* Arthur Koestler has written at length about this facet of human behaviour. He notes that the greater the level of automatisation, the lesser the freedom, although routines may be "called up" to conscious awareness by unusual or dangerous or shocking situations which call for a need to consciously re-appraise routine behaviours.

instance, consciousness may override all previous influences. This, however, presents us with the rather alarming scenario of certain parts of the personality contending with others. The social or ethical conscience against the emotions, and so on. The only way one may be free is to know the origin of all the forces impinging upon, and forming what is known as consciousness. Thus Sartre's notion of total freedom entails a level of self-knowledge which scarcely seems possible.

The negation or denial of freedom in the Sartrean schema arises when a person refuses to recognise reality as it is. What constitutes reality is, has been, and possibly always will be, the subject of interminable debate. In Sartre's case, the reality of the human situation is summed up in the word "absurdity". Human existence is absurd, since it is eventually ended by the nothingness of death. Life cannot be fitted into the meaning of some greater context. Sartre is an atheist, and for him there can be no thought of an after life, or some other larger frame of reference, which may give human life some meaning other than that which one takes care to inject into it while it persists. Sartre sees no evidence of god, and therefore must live as if there were no god. Existentialism admits of no fictions, philosophical, or otherwise. A person must live life how he sees it, and how he sees it must be distinguished from how he would like to see it.

For an individual to claim that he has to act in such and such a way, is, for Sartre, an act of bad faith, an inauthentic act, and a basic denial of what a human essentially is, namely, free. Denial of this freedom often results from the abandonment of the personal frame of reference to that of a role such as employer, worker, father, or man, for that matter. A person claims that he must do something because his role calls upon him to do so. The validity of Sartre's analysis is clear, but, when it comes to passing the test of authenticity, we would all fail. We not only adopt roles, but have them thrust upon us. However, one may presumably distinguish degrees of authenticity. Freedom, and the possibilty of freedom, carry with them the threat of anxiety. Denial of freedom, an inauthentic mode of existence, carries with it the certainty of guilt, which is a recognition that one is not living up to one's potential, through a denial of freedom. Anxiety must be embraced as the necessary counter-face of freedom. In Tillich's words, it is necessary to have "courage to be".

The failure to act or to maintain a course of action or style of existence because it is perceived as unsafe, is explained as an inablity to recognise that being has its negative side: non-being. Non-being, as has been indicated, may be the possibility of actual bodily death, or threats to the ego-system, which most

of us identify with ourselves. Non-being also endangers our existence through meaninglessness. A person may feel threatened by the possibility that his life has no meaning. The usual response to such questioning is to attempt to stop it by means of immersion in life's daily round of activities and attitudes, which, because they are nearly universally endorsed, provide a buffer of readily constructed meaning. The price to be paid for this is freedom. One cannot act other than within the narrow range delineated by upbringing, class, race, sex, for to do so would question the validity of acquired imperatives, and possibily expose their solely relative value.

The usual ethical and moral problems arise when it is asserted that one should do as one pleases.* Sartre's notions of freedom often seem overly individualistic, failing to take into account that, as humans, we are gregarious, and would probably not be as we are, except that cooperation within and among groups allows us to develop culture, knowledge, and so forth. Suffice to say that, from an existential point of view we should do as we please, bearing in mind that, as the free author of an action, one is then bound to accept responsibility for its consequences.

* Camus has examined this problem in "The Rebel".

To deny the possibility of non-being, or to avoid situations because they contain such a possibility, is mistaken behaviour, since this reduces freedom, and impedes the development of self. This attitude is summed up in Nietzsche's famous dictum that anything which does not kill me makes me stronger. Strength here is not taken to imply some sort of aggressive, or even assertive approach, but an attitude to life which is not apt to deny aspects which a person finds uncomfortable or troubling. If an individual's routine is largely a matter of avoiding unpleasant situations, then that person really is being shaped by the environment. Neurotic forms of behaviour are the usual means by which we deny the essential freedom to be. In the everyday course of events one may reasonably expect to encounter hostility and aggression. Yet always to act so as not to run the risk of provoking these reactions leads to a constriction of being, the feeling that one is not really a free agent, but rather an individual who must always allay the onset of anxiety, by conforming to the wishes or ideals of others.

It can be seen that the notions of anxiety, freedom and guilt are closely related concepts that inhere in being. Being ontological categories, they cannot undergo an exhaustive objective description: they must be experienced. From the viewpoint of existential therapy, it must therefore be assumed that progress or success

does not merely entail an intellectual insight but a conscious decision followed by an action to live in some other way.

An authentic existence can be characterised as creative, in that one is always looking for new angles on old themes, seeing familiar things in different lights; what Koestler calls "bisociation": "The perceiving of a situation or idea in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference." (14) He sees this as a feature underlying all creative acts. Creativity is the act of the simultaneous perception of one object, idea or situation in terms of two matrices. "A matrix is any ability, habit, any pattern of ordered behaviour governed by a code of fixed rules." (15) Thus, if freedom imples creativity, then it is essentially a dynamic process. It must be sought out, and is inherently risky. Sarnoff and Cole (1983) noted that, in a study of Piaget's it was noticed that mentally ill persons will not reason in terms of probabilities. "Rather, they impose certainty on situations which have only probabilistic outcomes. This is not because they lack the logical thinking skills by which to reason in probabilistic terms, but because they will not admit the notion of anything except certainty." (16) This is in accord with the existential idea of mental illness and behaviour as attempts to allay anxiety. It is not possible to know, realistically, how our actions will

turn out. Our knowledge is probabilistic, and therefore tinged with anxiety. Laing asserts that the peculiar tendency of some schizophrenic and psychotic individuals to claim omnipotence and/or omniscience, stems from the deeply anxious nature of their existences.

Heidegger and the later German existentialists set forth three modes of being, and within this tripartite scheme there seems to be the necessary allowance for facticity, that Sartre overlooks. Humans occupy these three modes simultaneously.

The world of nature, of biological and physical necessity, is known as "Umwelt" (the world around). The mode of being with one's fellows - this entails personal, family and societal relations, is termed "Mitwelt" (the world with - i.e., the world of relations). These two modes of being have received a good deal of attention from natural science. Freud, for instance, was mainly concerned with the manner in which the biological mode of existence is lived. Since he is assumed, rightly or wrongly, to have taken this as the dominant or only possible mode, he is thought of as a biological determinist. The consciousness of the individual is formed by forces lying in the subconscious.

"Mitwelt" is not meant to imply, as Kemp (1971) points out, social determinism, or the determination of consciousness by class in the Marxist sense, for example. This form of social influence may be included,

but mitwelt is meant to cover the mode of relationship with others whereby the "I" and the "Other" are mutually interrelated, such that a change in one affects a change in the other, to some extent. Also the "meaning of others in the group is partly determined by one's own relationship to each of them." (17) This has implications for the existential therapist, in that having understood the meaning of "mitwelt", he cannot afford to treat his client as an impersonal set of test results, or the like. The success of therapy is understood to depend a great deal on the quality of the personal relationship - the mitwelt. The counsellor cannot imagine that he can remain on the periphery, as some sort of unbiassed arbiter of the scientific data.

The differentiation of the mode of being known as "Eigenwelt" ("I" world) tends to delineate the existential from other psychological perspectives. Eigenwelt is thought to be a solely human characteristic. It is, in fact, the characteristic or potential that makes humans human. It is a mode of being characterised by self-awareness, self-relatedness, self-transcendence. It is the ability to grasp the meaning of something and to know that one thing may have many meanings, some of which are completely personal and idiosyncratic.

In regard to freedom, it is the undernourishment of the eigenwelt which results in lack of experiential

freedom. The other two modes are considered important by the existentialists, and at any time the individuals is influenced by, and lives in, (be's in) one or other aspect of all three modes. However, as has been stated by Kemp....."whereas we are impelled towards the first two relationships....the eigenwelt aspect of our world may remain under-developed." (18) That is to say, the effects of biology and human interaction are givens over which we have little choice. Obviously, there are differences in individual mitwelt, but one can safely say that no one escapes the influence of others.

Eigenwelt, however, may be consciously developed, although, as Kemp indicates, it has undergone a devaluation., especially by our tendency to divide subject from object, and to equate objectivity (i.e, something divorced from our self), with truthfulness. Implicit in the existentialist tradition is the belief that the development of the eigenwelt is the primary project for the human being. In the twentieth century, at least, the rise of science and technology, the depersonalisation of existence, has served to weaken the eigenwelt, to the extent that people no longer look to themselves for validity, but must have their existences justified by their approximations to such benchmarks as progress, the good life, happiness and other such concepts as mass-communication can successfully propagate.

CHAPTER IV

EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

INTRODUCTION:

To examine the goals of existential psychotherapy it is useful to ask what is the task of psychotherapies and counselling methods in general. It could be generalized that mostly they are concerned with helping the person adjust to the demands of his environment. Scientific technology is interested primarily in attaining optimal performance. If one asks what is an optimal dairy cow, the answer is fairly obvious. One which produces more and better milk. What an optimal human being is, however, is nowhere near as clear. As far as is discernible, the cow doesn't question whether or not it likes producing milk, or whether in fact it likes being a cow. It is not likely to ask itself questions concerning the "meaning of it all", and whether or not life in the paddock is at all worthwhile? Humans, however do ask themselves these questions, and usually require reasonable, if not provable answers. Humans generally have to have reasons for doing things. Often these reasons are vague,

contradictory, or plainly false. However, they do provide a greater context in which people go to work, raise families, produce works of art, and so forth. This is the context of meaning.

Questions of meaning are not part of the natural science methodology. Therefore, at a certain level, the natural sciences lose their ability to satisfactorily elucidate human behaviour. The existential tradition holds questions of meaning to be of importance. To set goals for existential psychotherapy, it seems necessary to make clear what the existential view of "human" is, and what is good for a human. Kierkegaard and Heidegger both posed questions concerning the human condition. Basically they concluded that man is a creature who is only partially complete. It is the task of an individual in his time to develop and mature his own innate potentialities. This will not happen automatically, but requires conscious, directed effort. Part of this effort lies in questioning the nature and circumstances of one's own conditions. To live one's life in unquestioning obedience to the strictures of social and cultural institutions is to live inauthentically; to live not as a human, but as a thing. Whether conditions at any time have been suited to living an authentic life is questionable. However, the mass society we now inhabit seems particularly detrimental to this project. Such a society is geared to generalised consumption, not merely of goods, but also of ideas, tastes, and attitudes.

The industrial, high-tech society necessitates an homeogeneous system of values, since it relies on mass action of a highly co-ordinated and co-operative nature to achieve its ends. The ideas of progress, wealth for all, the all-redeeming power of money, have welded industrial society together for over a century. People in such a society are more and more apt to be defined, and to define themselves, in terms of their eight-to-five activity. Herbert Marcuse (1972) has written about the flattening out of human nature, what he calls one-dimensional man. Marcuse argues that the successful western societies, whether they be of a democratic or totalitarian nature, become less and less tolerant of individual diversity the more they are able to protect the individual from want. The satisfaction of needs - real or created - demands, he says, a quid pro quo. This is obedience of thought and action. The debasement of language through stereotypic forms of mass-communication renders it bland, ridden with cliches, predictable, and universal. This is essentially an Orwellian argument, which states that language and other forms of symbolic communication and ideation supply the means by which we formulate alternatives and opinions. It becomes impossible to design viable alternatives or to articulate them, because the symbolic means to formulate critiques are absent, due to the impoverishment of language.

The average person does not see himself as inhabiting some sort of Orwellian wasteland however. Yet, it is apparent that a good many people find themselves in positions of work, marriage and so forth which they would prefer to vacate. What keeps most of them in line ?

The above is mentioned to illustrate that freedom is a rather intangible and nebulous notion when one considers it in a human and social context. Yet freedom is the avenue that the existential psychotherapist is trying to open up for his client. This freedom springs from a realistic awareness of the person's position in the world, and a certain capacity to endure the inevitable anxiety which accompanies living by one's own choices. Basescu (1974) defines free will as the felt experience of freedom of choice. This freedom may be related to physical freedom, but is not contained by it. Socrates and Thomas Moore are historical example of individuals whose freedom of choice resulted in their physical confinement and death. Freedom, Basescu maintains, is greatest where the most potential exists - rather as if we stood at the junction of many roads. Yet to experience freedom, one must choose, and paradoxically accept, a reduction of freedom. That is, a lessening of choice due to a commitment to a choice of action.

To armour ourselves against the fact that we are always standing at a point where decisions are warranted, we have religious and philosophical systems which not only provide meaning but often prescribe courses of action. God, as Nietzsche insists, may have died, but being sorely missed, he has been revived, rather vindicating Voltaire's assertion that if god didn't exist then we would have had to invent him. A religious attitude is an attitude of wonder, and the questioning of our meaning in the cosmos. As such, it is part of man's general tendency to seek, to need to find meaning. It is only when man stops questioning and, satisfied with provisional answers, he wraps himself in closed systems and dogmas, that his religions and philosophies become stagnant, oppressive, and inhuman.

EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

Given that the existentialists emphasise the primacy of consciousness and self-awareness in humans, and view with disdain the attempt to view the human level of human behaviour reductively (to reduce consciousness to Stimulus-Response, for example), what then is their approach to dealing with the problems of their clients in a therapeutic setting ?

There is no school of existential psychotherapy as such, that could be identified by a common background

of training and/or method. Rather, what identifies the existentiallly-oriented therapist is the set of assumptions that arise from the ontological inquiry into human nature, originating in Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Binswanger, Sartre and others. From these follow certain generalised methods and orientations. Kemp (1971) identifies a number of these:

(1) Techniques follow understanding. This is taken to mean that the primary task of the existential counsellor is to establish the nature of his client's mode of being. From this follows the application of any particular technique.

(2) Existential counsellors ask different questions from counsellors of differing orientations. This follows from the first consideration, in that, to establish the nature of the client's being-in-the-world the therapist asks questions which help him to clarify what it is the client is attempting to achieve. This is based on the existential concept of human potentia, which are always seeking to be achieved, but which may become thwarted or distorted.

(3) Problems take their meaning from the client's own immediate ontological existence. The past is assumed to be an important influence, only as the client perceives it. The drives, reinforcement and learning histories mentioned by other models are not denied validity, but are examined from an ontological perspective, that is,

as potentia for existence which may be denied due to the desire to avoid anxiety.

(4) Existential counselling requires a unique relationship: it is the being of the counsellor which is seen to be the crucial factor. His relationship must be a genuine one, based on a sincere desire to understand the other person. An approach based on an over-confident belief in the efficacy of technique or technological knowledge merely objectifies the client, and puts him out of the reach of the therapeutic process.

(5) Existential counselling requires a unique purpose. The purpose of existential counselling is the recovery and maintenance of authentic being. It has nothing to do with social adjustment.

(6) Commitment is primary. This follows from the realisation that insight into one's own condition does not necessarily solve one's problem. Intellectualisation does not necessarily lead to action. Thus, the client makes progress only to the extent that he is affectively committted to make decisions, and to act upon them.

(7) Attitude towards anxiety. While it is not necessary to engender anxiety, it is recognised that anxiety is the sign that something is happening with the client. There is some area in which he is unable to commit himself. Anxiety is not to be avoided.

It can be seen from these few points that the existential approach to counselling is not scientific,

in the sense that there is a well-formulated methodology and technique, but philosophical. It begins from an investigation into the nature of being human - what being human entails by way of potential, anxiety and so on. Self-awareness is seen to change the level of potential, and the nature of apprehending the world. Thus, things are not only what they are, but also what they mean.

Technique is a matter of taste for the existential counsellors, although they eschew those which they see as de-humanising. Disregarding the validity of the existential world-view, the soundness of counselling is thus dependent on the ability of the therapist to be what he is helping his client to be, that is, an individual who can authentically manifest his true self, and who is also capable of a large degree of empathy and understanding of others.

Carkhoff and Berenson (1967), in a critical review of the major psychotherapies, criticise the existential method for being overly intellectual. "Most often the communication process involves analysing the existential meaning of human experience, rather than the direct expression of experience .... thus the process is, as in client-centred therapy, a highly verbal transaction analyzing words about feelings." (1) They further go on to say: "The ultimate goal of any successful therapeutic process must be action on the part of both therapist and

patient." (2) This criticism is obviously at variance with Kemp (1971), who agrees that action and commitment to action are therapeutic fundamentals. The fact that there is no definable school of existential psychotherapy, does not allow for a general overview of method, technique and so forth. However, Bugental, a widely known American existential counsellor, is explicit that actions are more important than verbalizations. "The concepts of existential psychology are meant to portray and illuminate the basic human experiences. An existentialism that is abstract and chiefly intellectual-verbal is a self-contradiction." (3) He recognises, nevertheless, that the therapist's room is far removed from the outside world, where decisions made in therapy must be acted upon. Thus, in a group process, to confront the meaning of "my death", the exercises Bugental initiates are unintellectual, and contain as much affective content as his skill allows him to inject into the situation. Obviously, the ability to create a "real" atmosphere is dependent on the competence of the therapist.

Carkhoff and Berenson find that many existential therapists are overly verbal. This is, however, a criticism of individual practitioners, not a telling critique of the theory as such. On the contrary, the reported behaviour of such therapists as cited by Carkhoff et al is at variance with the stated aims and

spirit of existentialism, which is nothing if not a practical approach.

With regard to existential counselling and therapy, Carkhoff et al make other pertinent remarks:

(1) Existential counselling allows the possibility of an honest human encounter. "Indeed, of all the major therapeutic orientations, the existential approach offers the greatest possibility for both therapist and client to employ themselves fully." (4)

(2) Likewise, Carkhoff et al see the existential approach as positive, in that it offers a "well-developed cosmology" within which the client may find direction. This may be true, and although Carkhoff et al mean it as a positive statement, from an existential viewpoint the provision of ready-made cosmologies is something to be avoided. On the negative side, the world-view of the existentialists is seen as a hindrance, in that it is limited by what it excludes. This is especially true in the therapeutic sphere, where certain techniques may be ruled out because they are seen to treat man as less than human.

(3) The value-system of the existentialists is made explicit, and therapy, therefore, has recognisable goals. This is in contradiction to most therapies.

(4) Finally, the existential approach necessitates a "healthy" therapist, since the therapist does not merely employ techniques as tools, but more importantly,

creates an ambience. Thus "as in all psychotherapy the process is as effective as the therapist is whole. However, in existential therapy, the therapist is the living embodiment of the values which the system makes explicit. It must be underscored that insufficient attention is given to the logical extension of existential thinking: the therapist must teach by the example of his person, not by his analysis. In acting the therapist expresses his existence - and it had better be a good one." (5)

Carkhoff and Berenson present their views on existential therapy in the context of a book examining most of the major psychotherapies. They make the observation that any therapy is only as good as the therapist is "whole". The therapist needs to possess sufficient (i.e., vast) reservoirs of physical and emotional energy, and have an ability to be completely honest. The therapist whose personal level of development is such that he must defend himself, guard his own insecure self, is of little use to the person seeking his help.

Carkhoff et al account for a great deal of therapeutic progress not in terms of technique or philosophy (although they allow a place for these), but by the level of functioning of the therapist himself. "Counselling and psychotherapy can have constructive or deteriorative consequences for clients, and these

changes can be accounted for by the level of the therapist functioning on facilitative dimensions, independently of the therapist's orientations." (6)

The level of functioning mentioned above refers to the quality of communication exhibited by the therapist, formulated in terms of honesty, empathy, positive regard, and the like. The client is able to explore within the relationship only to the extent that the therapist consistently exhibits these qualities.

Theoretically, the existential orientation to therapy should be extremely effective, since it extols the virtues of establishing a sound and honest relationship with the client. The therapist tries to "be" with the client, as they say. Effective communication is not possible, in the view of the existentialists, unless the therapist can see things from the client's viewpoint. Thus the maxim that understanding precedes technique.

It is perhaps to make an obvious point that the originators of quite diverse types of therapy were individuals often quite notable for their unique, forceful or charismatic personalities. Thus it may be, as Carkhoff et al contend, that the success of psychoanalysis, Gestalt, or Behaviour Modification has not so much to do with techniques or the correctness of theory per se but with the effectiveness of the practitioner as a communicator and motivator, as an understanding and

clarifying influence. Possibly this is also the reason why the proliferation of therapies often have an almost cult nature. Many depend for their strength on the attractive power of a single guru figure.

The qualities which Carkhoff et al hold to be necessary for effective therapy regardless of theoretical orientation, are also those which are advocated by existential philosophers and therapists. Needless to say, it is one thing to speak of empathy and quality of communication, and another to display the same consistently, or to be able to critically examine one's own communicative attitude. No doubt we all consider ourselves good, non-prejudiced communicators. Communication failure is almost always explained by the ineptitude or stupidity of the other person, and not by poor signalling on one's own part.

The advantage of an existential therapy is that it places the fundamentals of therapy at the centre, rather than at the periphery, where they may appear as useful but not particularly important adjuncts to more scientific techniques. This assertion is of course dependent for its validity on the idea that therapy is a matter of a meeting of individual humans. If this is not true then some therapies could equally well be carried out by machine technology.

ETHICAL ISSUES IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

From the point of view of usable techniques in therapy, the existentialists are in somewhat of a bind. They are loathe to employ certain methods, such as some conditioning techniques, since they see this as reducing man's status to that of an object, or at least to some passive organism whose actions may be shaped this way or that. They are not so closed to the matter as to assert that behavioural conditioning is ineffective. Indeed, if it was ineffective, it would presumably be non-controversial. Rather they see that there is danger in that, at times such methods may be effective. From this limited degree of effectiveness, advocates of such methods are prone to conclude that (a) the methods could be effective at any time if only conditions could be controlled and relevant reinforcement histories known etc; (b) since the method is effective (if only partially) then its underlying rationale, its theoretical base, and the view of man it promotes, is also sound. This clearly is not a logical conclusion. Skinner denies that he holds to any particular theory. However one may deduce a person's philosophy to some extent, not only by what he holds to be relevant, but also by what he deems to be of no consequence.

In order to run counter to the prevailing world-view in psychology, which sees man as a rather complex

machine capable of being conditioned in any way given the right techniques, the existentialists are somewhat driven to deny that some levels of behaviour are amenable to conditioning and counter-conditioning. The argument is not only one of means but also of ends. Existentialism has a world-view, and therefore must consider what effects the whole. Existentialists do not see behavioural techniques in isolation, but as merely one more aspect of the dehumanisation of mankind. Therefore, although they may at times be useful, their use is to be avoided.

It is easily arguable that many problems requiring therapy are not neccessarily of an existential nature. Such problems as could be labelled existential indicate a somewhat self-questioning, quasi-philosophical attitude, on the client's part. It is doubtful that all problems spring from an inquiry or doubting of the meaning of life in general, or mine in particular. Thus, as with any therapy which is based essentially on a theory of how things are, the use of such theory-based therapy may not be indicated when the problem falls outside its realm. Psychoanalysis has made itself the object of satire and parody at times by attempting, apparently, to base all human problems on freudian categories of biological determinism. The temptation to characterise all psychological difficulties as being of an existential nature, invites the same reaction.

Another problem facing the existential therapist is that he is not, or rather, cannot be, if he is what his name implies, an advocate of therapy for adjustment or socialisation. Consequently, how he fits into the mental health schema may be problematical, given its links to the powers upholding the status quo. An existential therapist is concerned, not with supplying a personal frame of reference which is compatible with social or political norms, not with making a person a useful member of society, as the expression has it. On the contrary, the living out of an individual's potential may involve him in the thorough questioning of the customs of thought and behaviour which have been inculcated and accepted since childhood.

Expressions such as "increasing a person's efficiency", "making a person useful", or "helping to adjust" are not favoured by the existentialists, since they connote attitudes which one holds in relation to objects or tools. For the existentialists, the human being is an end in himself. He or she needs no justification for existence in terms of productivity or usefulness to society. Heidegger observed that in the twentieth century there is a tendency for even humans to be judged and quantified in terms of their usefulness to the productive forces of industrial society. Humans are thus counted as a "standing reserve", a sort of resource pool, rather like coal or oil reserves. Such

attitudes are reflected in expressions in the language that are so commonplace that their origin and implication are given little thought. We have the Labour Department. In Canada it is known as the Manpower Department. A permanent percentage of the population is unemployed, and this is seen as sound economic policy, as if the idea was that the economy's soundness is somehow divorced from the common good. The economy has managed to become reified as some sort of deity which humans keep in good health by scrambling to find a place in its machinations, and by occasionally sacrificing themseles to unemployment. E. F. Schumacher points out that we have turned the essential meaning of civilisation on its head. "Our civilisation, rather than seeking the perfection or refinement of human character, is almost wholly concerned with the multiplication of wants." (7) Social adjustment implies a pattern of behaviour and thought which does not implicitly or explicitly question the prevailing codes, whether these be of law or custom. Since the existential therapist must supposedly question the meaning of such codes for himself, his answers are not necessarily those generally accepted.

A further problem vis-a-vis therapeutic aid stems from the view that things and the world have no final meaning or at least any one meaning which is better than numerous others. The pain, suffering or happiness etc,

experienced in life, cannot be given meaning or justification with reference to some greater cosmology, and therefore be made easier to withstand. Thus the existential therapist cannot be party to what Tennessen (1966) calls "suification", which is the offering of comforting illusions and philosophies in place of intellectual honesty and the maintenance of a questioning attitude. Tennessen maintains that full humanisation or self-realisation necessitates the admission that life in general and one's own life in particular is quite without meaning. He does not equate humanity or maturity with what is usually called psychological health, which is rather, he says, the ability to adapt, somewhat along the lines of biological/environmental adaptation. In this case, one adapts one's attitudes and ideas to better ensure one's survival. This is psychological health, but not the development of one's humanity, he says. Tennessen makes some scathing, although humorous remarks, about some psychotherapies, and about some existential psychotherapies, especially Frankl's, which seek to provide a philosophical safety net for their clients, and "....to save them from the vertiginously pernicious, insufferable insights into the monstrous absurdity of human life." (8) The sensation or realisation of absurdity is a theme which recurs throughout existential literature. It is bound to the human search for meaning

and the doubtfulness of the existence of any final meaning. We do not intend to enter into a discussion of whether or not life has meaning. Suffice to say, that people think it is important that it should have, or may have, or may not have.

The existential therapist does not count among his tasks either the adaptation of the individual to society, or the provision of a "meaning for life", which may give a person the motivation to continue living. Clarity is what the existential therapist seeks for himself and his client. His role is to develop in his client an awareness of his (the client's) actual condition as a human. This is not meant to imply that clear awareness of one's own condition is equal to some sort of final knowledge,. Quite the contrary. As Tennessen points out, our most penetrating insight at this time can only be that our knowledge is extremely imperfect. "It seems that the only incorrigible knowledge we have ascertained so far is that there is no incorrigible knowledge" (9)

In this light it can be seen that the term "existential psychotherapy" is used in a rather wider sense than it should be. Many so called existential therapies are concerned with the supply of meaning and modes of adjustment. It is not that the existentialists claim that life does not or can not have meaning. What the meaning is, however, is for each individual to discover by his own means. If he can discover no meaning

then he must conclude in all honesty that life is essentially absurd.

To what extent psychotherapists of an existential inclination live up to these conditions is unknown. It does seem to follow that anyone calling himself an existential psychotherapist must be prepared, as Tennessen put it, "... to remain in the chilly outdoors." (10) It is worthwhile to note that Tennessen himself is speaking of philosophers, who, while being an admirable group of people, do not, in their professional existence, confront the anxiety and misery which befall many people, and which is the daily round for psychotherapists. It seems reasonable to assert that any therapist worthy of the name is capable of a degree of empathy with his clients. It is difficult to see how, given such empathy, a therapist would not be moved to try to improve the psychological lot of the individual in the direction of what is generally called happiness. Happiness may of course connote lack of insight. Ignorance is bliss. How therapists resolve the tension between a human desire to improve the life conditions of their clients and their existential viewpoint is unknown.

S U M M A R Y

In assessing the relationship of existentialism to psychology, it is necessary to re-iterate that there is a great deal of controversy and debate within the discipline as to what its goals, if any, should be, what constitutes the most fruitful line of research, what models of man, consciousness, intelligence and so on, are most viable. Also how closely should psychology identify itself with the principles and methods of the natural sciences? Clearly there are multiple lines of demarcation and contention, and no unifying principles, other than the general description of psychology as the study of human behaviour. Psychological debates could become endlessly bogged down in the consideration of the meaning of the definition above, that is, what is human, and what is behaviour ?

There is disagreement over (a) How far the methods taken from the natural sciences can be employed usefully. Margaret Boden (1972) claims that, at least in theory, a reduction of psychology to physiology is feasible. The difficulty is that an explanation of motivation in such terms may be meaningless, in that it has lost sight of what it set out to explain.

(b) The goals of psychology. Is psychology a pure science? Given the numerous uses psychological findings are put to, this opinion would be difficult to substantiate. Are its goals the predicion and control advocated by Comte and Saint-Simon, as part of an effort to bring order and rationality to society by means of the sciences ?

Given its subject matter, it would be difficult to defend the notion that psychology is ethically neutral. Correctly or incorrectly, in the public mind, the findings of psychology are taken as pronouncements about how we are, to a large extent.

Taking these factors into account, it seems inconsistent to dismiss existentialism because of its implicit and explicit ethical or value content. It merely debates in the open and makes assertions concerning matters which psychology, as a discipline, largely keeps internalised.

Furthermore, existentialism cannot be ruled out of court because of its non-adherence to principles that, it maintains, are only applicable to the natural sciences. Psychology, if it is to be a science of humans, must forgo attempts to achieve the rigours of the hard sciences. The advantage it so achieves is that it retains intelligibility.

The concepts of existentialism are not compatible with a program of investigation that requires strict

empirical validation. Therefore, it must be conceded that an existential mode of investigation is only necessitated when it is uniquely human characteristics that are to be looked at. Where the dividing line is drawn in human behaviour between that which is uniquely human and that which is common to a large number of animals, is not easy to determine. It is asserted that it is at the level of self-consciousness, aesthetic or sensuous appreciation, creativity, where questions of meanings, purposes or goals are important, that an existential analysis of the human situation becomes useful.

Because there is no one body of literature which can be said to represent existentialism, it is possible to derive many shades of meaning on numerous issues from writers, playwrights, psychologists and the like, who call themselves or are called existentialists. Despite this, it is apparent that existentialism carries with it a number of themes and has ..... an implicit ethical content. It is not aligned, for instance, to the notion of material progress. Science, and technology, as they are now practised, contain the assumption that the improvement and perfection of material and technique will result in a continual movement towards some ideal future. The existentialists make no such assumptions, although they are not hostile to technological progress as such.

Existentialism, on the other hand, upholds a certain model of what it considers to be the truly human being and the truly authentic life. It maintains these models in the belief that human beings are inherently free, and that this free state is somehow good and desirable. These assumptions, of course, are always open to question. Also implied by the existentialists is the view that humans are in some way unique, and that this uniqueness makes them sacrosanct, such that they cannot be treated as objects, tools, or other means to an end. The modification of human behaviour by means which appear to overlook or deny that humans are self-conscious or capable of self-determination, is seen as demeaning manipulation, which, whatever its degree of effectiveness in making the individual a useful and functioning member of society, is objectionable. It is objectionable in that it denies and discourages humans to be what the existentialists say they actually are, that is, free. Again, it becomes clear that the level of functioning most amenable to conditioning techniques is a matter of contention. Existentialists like Sartre, who propose an absolute degree of freedom, would say that it is not proper at any level. One could take it from Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, as well as Heidegger, that there are aspects of human behaviour which are mostly unconscious, and that these may be changed only by conditioning or other technological methods. Any

existentialist would warn, however, that to think of a person as being any less human than oneself (with all the meaning of human so far mentioned) is an extremely dangerous practice, not only for the client, but ultimately for us all.*

In the psychotherapeutic setting, the existentialists emphasise what they see as the primary importance of eigenwelt - the experience from the position of the subjective "I". A healthy individual in this schema experiences the world and others chiefly through this personal mode. The lack or diminishment of the ability to do this results in the experience of remoteness, strangeness or revulsion in regard to things or people. Possibly this subjective experience of oneself may be diminshed to such an extent that it

* Danger arises for the client in that he becomes, in the eyes of the therapist, a manipulable object, which must be picked up and placed on the right course. The existential viewpoint places particular value on the acceptance of responsibility for one's own life. As far as they are concerned, being human means having that ability to transcend what is given in any situation. The disencouragement to each person to interpret each situation for himself through a diminution of responsibility is a disencouragement to develop human characteristics.

becomes difficult for the person to feel he has any identity or substance whatsoever.

Existential psychotherapy emphasises the development of the capacity to perceive oneself as the central originator of actions vis a vis one's own life. Life experiences are moved from the realm of the abstract/intellectual (things happen) to the affective/personal (things happen to me).

The role of the therapist in existential therapy is viewed as being of utmost importance. Carkhoff et al (1967) maintain that this is true in all effective therapy. However, in existential therapy it is explicitly stated. This emphasis on the quality of being of the therapist derives from the existential notion that one individual cannot objectively comprehend another in any complete sense. The best that can be done is to try to make contact with the subjective world of the other person. To do this the therapist must attempt to perceive what meaning his client places on different aspects of his world. The apprehension of such meaning is of paramount importance. Without it, the client and the therapist can only communicate as two people who only imperfectly or not at all understand each other's language.

The emphasis on the eigenwelt as the important mode of experience for humans does not detract from the influence of either the umwelt or mitwelt modes. All

three are active, and interact. But for the human being, the existentialists hold, it is by the self-aware creative person that biological and social influences are interpreted. The influences exerted by social and biological forces are not entirely determinable by their own character, but rather by the meaning that a person assigns to such factors. The assigning of authentic meaning takes place in the subjective eigenwelt mode.

The effectiveness of existential psychotherapy depends upon the possession by the therapist of such characteristics as empathy, affective communication, and the ability to create an ambience of honesty and trust. Existential therapists attempt to bridge the gap between individuals not by categorising the various essential chsaracteristics of individuals and then manipulating these, but by attempting to make a communication leap which does not simply involve words, but all the other human symbols of gesture and emotional nuance that are common to humans by virtue of shared experiences.

The emphasis on the quality of communication and on the being of the therapist stems from the belief that psychological difficulties arise not simply due to the action of external forces, but by the interpretation of such forces by the individual.

An over-emphasis on verbal communication and intellectualisation by some existential therapists has been noted. How general this characteristic is, is unknown. But it may be indicative of the fact that the background of existentialism is largely literary and philosophical, and that psychologists who have an existential orientation are apt to become overly engrossed in the philosophical implications of an existential mode of questioning. Hence, they talk too much and do too little. In this regard, a wall of lofty concepts is as restrictive as any rigid theory or strict adherance to technique. Despite this, existentialism, it must be noted, stresses commitment to action. Being implies action.

In existential psychotherapy understanding is placed before technique. Such understanding is gained by the method of using no method, of letting things be. In principle, at least, the therapist does not attempt to view the client through filters of theory or concept. It is their belief that maximum communication will achieve maximum understanding. Through such understanding, "what to do" makes itself apparent. This no-method is derived from Husserl's phenomenology.

Accomodating existentialism within psychology is very much dependent on making psychology a human science, whether or not psychologists are willing to accept the loss of their ideal of wholly rigorous

empirical science. Interest in existentialism has been seen by some as a retreat to ready-made answers in the face of difficulties encountered in the development of sound, scientific psychological knowledge. This, it is asserted, is quite incorrect. Existentialism posits no answers. It claims, quite reasonably, that a science of humans needs to take into account the special characteristics of humans as they experience them, and that the methods of the natural sciences are patently unable to fulfil this condition.

A P P E N D I X

POPPER'S ARGUMENT FOR INDETERMINISM

Popper (1982) marshalls a number of arguments for indeterminism, which range from commonsense observations to those of a more formal, logical type. He notes that the assertion that the world is inherently deterministic is more usually a reflection of the deterministic nature of theories than a true reflection of the world. "Now the prima facie deteministic character of a theory is closely related to its simplicity; prima facie deterministic theories are comparatively easily testable, and the tests may be made more and more precise and severe." (1)

These above-mentioned types of theories are to be preferred, due to their very nature of being testable. However, " ... it seems no more justifiable to infer from their success that the world has an intrinsically dterministic character than to infer that the world is intrinsically simple."

All prediction tasks operate with what Popper calls a simplifying model. This model defines certain parameters, telling us what to include and what to leave

out of our calculations. Therefore, no prediction task involves all conceivable states of the world. One could imagine such a state of affairs (see below), but in practice we make use of the simplifying model.

According to Popper, any scientific determinism entails the principle of accountability, and that " we have no reason to believe in "scientific" determinism if we have no reason to believe that the principle of accountability is universally satisfied." (2)

Popper outlines the principle of accountability in the following way: "Thus any satisfactory definition of "scientific" determinism will have to be based on the principle of accountability, that we can calculate from our prediction task (in conjunction with our theories of course) the requisite degree of precision of the initial conditions." (3)

Scientific determinism necessitates that we should be able to work out the necessary "degree of precision of our initial information that is needed to carry out the prediction task." (4)

Popper readily concedes that prediction of behaviour is to some extent possible. He also notes, however, that such behaviour is either goal-directed or tricks of habit. Also, such predictions lack precision. Popper admits that he can generally predict, from observation, when his cat will leap onto his writing desk, but he is sometimes wrong. And even when he is

correct, he has only succeeded in predicting a very general piece of behaviour. The cat may land some way from where he predicted it would. More knowledge of relevant initial conditions may improve his predictions, but as he adds: "We simply do not know what kind of initial conditions may be relevant to the prediction task of reducing (the error), It is not only that we have no theory of behaviour which satisfies the principle of accountability...up to now we have not even an idea where to look for such a theory." (5)

The claim that such data may be derived from research into brain-states amounts to giving up the argument of the predictability of behaviour, since the argument then becomes a matter of whether or not physiology or physics are deterministic.

To accurately predict the future state of a system based on perfect knowledge of laws and conditions amounts to a prediction of the future growth of our own knowldege. Popper shows that such self-prediction is not possible. "Assuming we are furnished with perfect theoretical knowledge, and present or past initial conditions, could we predict, by deductive methods, our own future state, for any given instant of time, and more especiually, our own future predictions ?" (6)

Once we have the requisite theory and data regarding conditions, the prediction task becomes a

matter of calculation only. Popper's proof for the impossibility of self-prediction is thus:

"...no calculator or predictor can deductively predict the results of its own predictions or calculations." Popper describes such a predictor and assumes (1) The predictor will always arrive at a correct reply;

(2) The predictor takes time to carry out its operations.

From (1) and (2) it is proven that "in the case of a self-prediction task the reply can only be complete after the event predicted, or at best at the same time. This is sufficient to establish our point - that the predictor cannot predict the future growth of its own knowledge." (7)

Further, it can be proved that the predictor will completely fail in its task. Popper makes two more assumptions regarding the predictor:

(3) Of any two replies issued by the predictor, the longer reply will take up more time than the shorter one;

(4) All replies given by the machine describe the state of some physical system explicitly in one and the same standard code or language.

A system A, supplied with complete knowledge of theory and conditions of system B, amounts in fact to system B. If it is to predict what system B will do at

such and such a time, it "... cannot predict its own future growth of knowledge, for its completed reply will come too late to be a prediction, since it can arise, at best, only together with the event predicted." (8)

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